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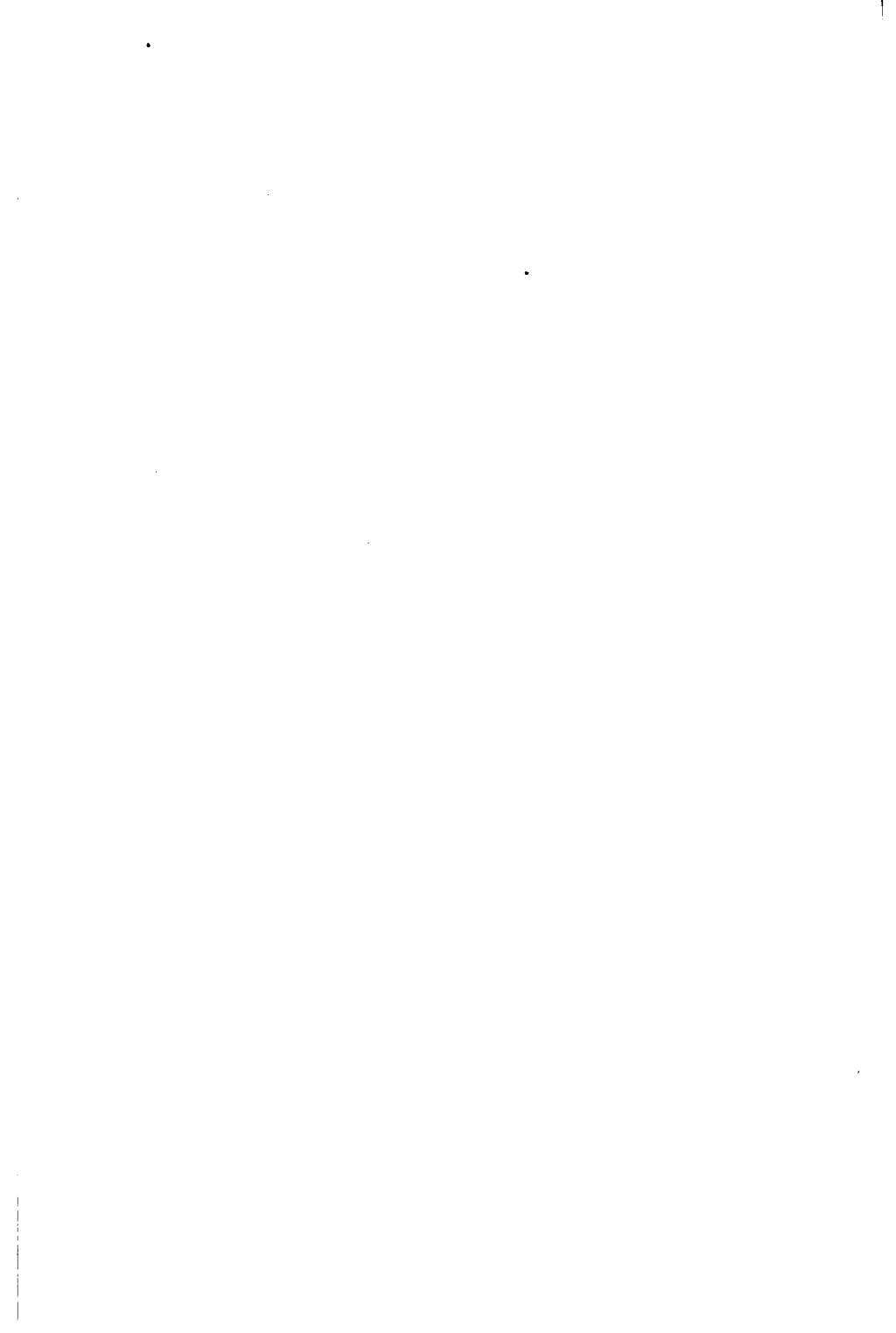


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The Beacon Series

A GRADED COURSE OF STUDY FOR THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

HEBREW BEGINNINGS

OLD TESTAMENT NARRATIVES. PART I

BY

EDNA H. STEBBINS

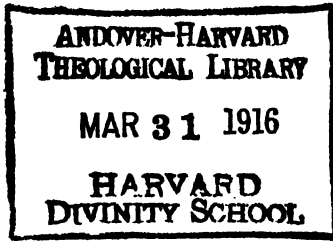
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I. The Creation of the World.

You will notice that our Bible is divided into two parts, called the Old Testament and the New Testament. The New Testament tells us about the life of Jesus and how his disciples spread his teachings. The Old Testament relates the history of the Jewish people, and what they thought about God before the time of Jesus. It begins with legends and traditions of the earliest heroes of the Hebrew race.

All nations whose history runs back for many centuries have such legends of their early days and delight to tell them. For instance, the Greeks had legends of Hector, of Achilles, of Hercules; the Romans, legends of Romulus and Remus, and of Horatius, "who kept the bridge"; and England has its legends of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table.

We cannot be sure that legends tell us truly and exactly what happened, because the facts were not written down at the time they occurred, and, in being told by fathers to their children for many generations, the stories would gradually be much changed; but they are of great value and interest to us because they do tell us how people lived in those early days, and what they thought about God and their duty to Him and to one another.

The Value of Bible Study.

The traditions of the Hebrew people mean more to us than those of any other race, because it is from this people that we have inherited our best thoughts of God. The story of the Hebrew religion is the story of our own religion. We shall find, as we study it, that in the earliest times people had strange ideas of the character of God, and they thought He did things and told them to do things which we now know He would not do. Then we shall see how, through the teachings of their prophets, the people of the Bible came to have higher and nobler and truer ideas, till at last Jesus, the greatest of all Hebrews and the most exalted teacher of any race or time, gave to us the high, noble, pure thought of God and life and

duty that all Christian nations hold to-day. As a child, Jesus studied and loved these stories of his nation's early heroes, and from them gained much of his wonderful moral strength.

So our religion has grown as a plant grows. Some one has said that the Hebrew religion was the strong, vigorous plant, and Christianity the beautiful flower.

Another reason why we should be familiar with the Bible men and women is that all literature is full of references to them, and we must know about these people ourselves in order to understand these allusions. A knowledge of the Bible is as necessary to a good education as a knowledge of American history or English literature. The men and women of the Bible are, for the most part, of fine, noble character, much like men and women to-day.

How the Bible Grew.

For long years before the stories of them were written they were told by fathers to their children down through many generations. Then they were put into writing. Many persons had a part in the writing before they reached their present form. Let us trace briefly the stages through which they passed.

First. Some time after the reign of King Solomon, many years after the events occurred, some man or group of men wrote out all these stories, which had only been told by word of mouth before. Scholars call this collection of stories the J collection, because the writer called God by the Hebrew word *Yahweh* or *Jahveh*. In our Bible it is translated *Jehovah* in the Revised Version and usually *Lord* in the King James Version.

Second. Another writer, living in another part of the kingdom, a few years later also put into writing the stories as *his* people used to tell them. His collection is called the E collection, because he called God by the Hebrew word *Elohim*, which in our Bible is translated *God*.

Third. Some years later these two collections were put together, the stories being fitted together as if written by one person. This explains why you will sometimes find both names used in the same story.

Fourth. In later years other writers wrote up the history of the nation, using some of the material of this early book, and made collections of their laws and poetry and genealogies. The chief of these writers is called P, because there is good reason for supposing he was a priest.

Fifth. Only a short time before the birth of Jesus all the different collections were rewritten and fitted in together, to form the account as we now have it in our Old Testament. This explains why we sometimes find two or three different accounts of the same event, and why these accounts do not always agree. The compilers (those who joined the different writings together) put in both the J and E stories, and sometimes the P story also.

Until quite recent years, people believed one person, Moses, wrote all the first five books of the Bible, and they found it impossible to explain the differences just mentioned. But with this later knowledge which men have gained through years of study it is very simple and clear.

The Story of Creation.

Turn to the first book in the Bible. What is it called? The word *Genesis* means *origin* or *beginning*, and it tells us of the ideas these early people had of the beginning of many things,—of man, of languages, and naturally, first of all, of the world itself.

The story of creation as told in the first chapter of Genesis is one of the most beautiful passages in the Old Testament. The writer tells us that God made the earth and planets, and all things that inhabit the earth, in six days, and rested on the seventh day. Read the account of the first day in Genesis 1: 1-3, the second day in verses 6-8. In the writer's day it was believed that the earth was flat like a disk, with the ocean washing it on all sides, and that the sky was a great dome stretched overhead, with the sun, moon, and stars moving about on its inner surface. Above the dome was more water which God let down in the form of rain through windows in the dome.

What was made the third day? Genesis 1: 9-13. The

fourth day? Verses 14-19. We know now that the sun gives us light and darkness and makes the grass and trees live and grow, so these could not have been made first, as this writer thought. What was the work of the fifth day? Verses 20-23. Of the sixth day? Verses 24-31. Read again verse 26. What do you think "in his own image" means? How has man "dominion" over all other forms of life? In what way has God enabled him to gain this "dominion"?

Read Genesis 2: 1-3. Do you think God ever rests? What in nature shows that He is always working? Long years after this story was written Jesus said, "My Father worketh even until now." Can you think why this writer said that He rested?

Scientists tell us that the earth was not made as this ancient writer thought, but has been slowly growing or developing for millions and millions of years. Men in every generation are learning more of God's ways, and we should not expect people who lived two thousand or more years ago to have as correct ideas as the people of to-day. But this account we have read tells us some things that will always be true,—that God made everything, that He cares for His works, and all that He does is good.

II. The First Man and Woman.

The story of the creation in the first chapter of Genesis is not the only one in our Bible. The second chapter gives us another account, which was written about four hundred years before the account in Genesis 1. These two stories of the same event make a good example of how men's thoughts of God have grown better and higher during the course of years. The ideas about God in the first chapter are much nobler than those of to-day's story, which is very different from the other. The writer of this second story tells us nothing about the earth being made in six days, and very little about the creation of the earth and sky and sea. But he tells us more about the first man and woman,—how they were made and where they lived.

The Early Story of Creation.

Turn to the second chapter of Genesis and read verses 4-6. What early collection of stories is this one taken from? How does this story say man was made? Read verse 7. Compare this with Genesis 1: 27, in which God does not need any materials to work with. Which thought is the nobler? Verse 7, however, tells us something which is beautiful and true. It is the breath or spirit of God in man that makes him superior to all the rest of creation,—the intelligence and will-power given him by God which make him "a living soul."

The Garden of Eden.

Read verses 8 and 9. *Eden* means *pleasure* or *loveliness*, and the thought of the story-writer is that it was God's plan for man to live happily there without any need of working for his food. Eating from the tree of life would keep the man forever young; he would never die. It cannot be known certainly where the story located the Garden of Eden, as the names mentioned in verses 11 and 13 are not known now. But the Hiddekel (verse 14) is supposed to be the Tigris,

and the Euphrates is still known by its ancient name. So Eden may have been the beautiful flowering country near the Persian Gulf. Jehovah, or the Lord God, put man into the garden to care for it, and to live on its fruits.

Read verses 15-17. Does it seem strange that God should tempt man by putting into the garden a tree of which he must not eat? The writer of the story thought God must have made man good at first, and the story of Adam's disobedience is his explanation of how sin or wrong-doing began in the world. Temptation is not a misfortune unless we make it so. Resisting it strengthens and develops the character, as exercise strengthens and develops the body.

Companions.

After the man was placed in the garden, in order that he might not be alone, Jehovah God made the various animals, and let the man name them. Read verses 18-20. But these creatures were not suitable companions for a man who was a "living soul," so woman was made. Read the account in verses 21 and 22. The Hebrew for *rib* also means *side*, so the thought of the story is that God made woman to live by the side of man. It tells us of the beginning of marriage in the world.

The Temptation.

When Adam and his wife were put into the garden, they were like little children, not knowing right from wrong, and suddenly this knowledge came to them. Read Genesis 3: 1-7. Does this knowledge come to us all at once or is it gradual? How do we learn what is right and what is wrong? Can you think how the first men and women may really have learned it? We shall notice a little later why the story said it was a serpent that tempted them.

At the time this story was first told and written, people thought of God as a great and powerful man who was in many ways like themselves. You will find this idea in verse 8. What other strange idea is found in this verse? Is it possible to hide from God? Why did they wish to hide? To sin is to

do what we know to be wrong. The Hebrew word for sin means *missing the mark*. What mark had this man and woman *missed*? Read verses 9-14 and notice how, like people to-day, each tried to put the blame on some one else. Then God punished the man and woman and the serpent.

The Punishment.

In ancient days, as we shall see through all these early stories, men had a way of reasoning backwards. If any unfortunate condition was noticed or any disaster occurred, it was believed that God sent it as a punishment for some sin. Because the snake had to crawl in the dust and was feared and hated by every one, they thought it must be under a curse, and so the story says, "And Jehovah God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, cursed art thou above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life." What was the man's punishment? Read verses 17-19. In the country where this story-writer lived, men had to labor very hard to raise the fruits and grains they used for food, on account of the abundance of weeds and thorns and thistles. These must be growing, he thought, to punish man for some sin.

But this was not all the punishment. Read verses 20-24. Had God forbidden man before to eat of the tree of life? But now, because of his sin, he must live a few years only: then he must die. This is the old Hebrew explanation of how death came into the world to put an end to man's plans and to bring sorrow to his friends.

The Truth in the Story.

Through all the ages since this story was written men have been learning more of God and His ways, so we know that things cannot have happened just as stated here; but, like the account of creation in the first chapter of Genesis, much that is true may be found in it. This story is the history of every human life. When we were little children, we lived in a Garden of Eden, happy and without care. As the child grows older, he learns about good and evil; he is tempted to do

wrong and sometimes yields; he learns that God has made laws which are for his good if they are obeyed, and, if he disobeys them, he suffers for it. As he gets older, he, too, must work for his daily bread and for the care of his family; and then, at last, comes death.

But we know now, as these early people did not know, that what we call death does not end our real life,—that part of us which thinks and feels and loves. Just as the butterfly comes from the chrysalis, so the soul goes on living in a new world. And, if we obey the voice of God, as it speaks in our own conscience and in the teachings of noble men and women, in spite of work and care our lives will be very useful and happy and beautiful.

III. Cain and Abel.

In the story of Adam and Eve you learned how the early Hebrews accounted for the existence in the world of sin and labor and death. In the story of Cain and Abel they explain the origin of one of their religious customs,—the offering of sacrifices.

The Custom of Sacrifice.

In order to understand the story of Cain and Abel we must know something about this custom and the belief about God which gave rise to it. We have learned that God is a loving Father who is always working for what is best for His children, but ancient peoples thought of Him as a stern judge who rewarded or punished according to His mood.

The Greeks and Romans and most nations of early times worshiped by means of sacrifices. With some peoples the sacrifice was an animal, with others it was fruits and grains. The offering was placed on an altar, in earliest times of stone, and burned. The odor of the smoke as it rose toward heaven was supposed to be very pleasing to God. It served Him as food. If the harvest had been very abundant or the herds of sheep and goats had prospered, the farmer or the shepherd offered a sacrifice of some of the best as a token of his thankfulness. If a drought or disease or any misfortune came, it was thought that God was angry and sent it as a punishment, and then, in fear, a sacrifice was offered in the hope that God would forget His anger and give prosperity once more.

Sometimes before going into battle a sacrifice was offered, with the expectation that God would send a reward of victory; and sometimes a sacrifice after the battle, of something very dear, was promised if victory came. You will see how this was trying to make a bargain with God. So it came about that among the nations less noble than the Jews, when special favor was desired from God, men and women would sacrifice their

own children, and it was very common for certain nations to sacrifice the prisoners they took in battle.

Those peoples whose chief occupation was agriculture usually presented an offering of fruits and grains and olive oil; but the Jews, who in their early days were shepherds, were very strict in their belief that Jehovah preferred a sacrifice of animals, as the story shows. So they burned on the altar the flesh, and especially the fat, of bulls and goats and lambs. With this knowledge of the ancient custom it is easier to understand the legend of Cain and Abel, which is the story of the first sacrifice.

The First Sacrifice.

This story, like the last, is a J story. You will notice that it speaks of God as walking and talking, as the Garden of Eden story did. Cain and Abel were the sons of Adam and Eve. Abel, when he grew up, became a shepherd; but Cain became a "tiller of the soil," or farmer, raising fruits and grains.

Now turn to the fourth chapter of Genesis and read verses 3-5. How the Jews came to believe Jehovah preferred animal sacrifice we do not know. The story gives no reason. When Jehovah saw that Cain was angry and looked sullenly toward the ground, he warned Cain that his jealous thoughts might cause him to commit some sin. Temptation was waiting, as a wild beast at the door, to seize him, but he must be stronger than his evil desire and conquer it. Did Cain heed the warning? Genesis 4: 6-8.

The Punishment.

What did Jehovah say to Cain after his terrible deed? Verse 9. What do you think of Cain's reply? Sometimes, in our day, people give this same excuse for neglecting their duty toward those they can help. What did Jesus teach about this in his parable of the Good Samaritan? Read the account of the punishment in verses 11-14. Notice that Cain speaks of being "hid from the face of Jehovah." People of the time when this story was written did not know that there was one God over all the earth. They believed there were many gods, each one ruling over a certain part of the world; and if

any one went from his own country, he went away from the protection of his god into the land of another god who did not care for him or his people. Jehovah was the god of the Hebrews, and they believed he was stronger than other gods and could protect them a little in other lands, though not so well as in their own. So, to protect Cain, Jehovah told him that, if any one killed him, seven lives of the murderer's friends would be taken in exchange for his. This practice was considered right and just at this early period. And to make Cain safer a sign was placed on him to show that he was still under Jehovah's protection. Verses 15 and 16.

Cain's Descendants.

After Cain went out into the land of Nod, which means the land of Wandering, we are told that he built the first city. Then we are also told something about his descendants. Jabal was the first man to make and live in a tent, and his brother Jubal was the first musician. He invented the harp and the pipe, which was similar to the flute. And a cousin of these two, named Tubal Cain, was the first to work in metals. He forged "every cutting instrument of brass and iron." So this story of Cain and Abel gives us the Hebrew idea of the beginning of worship by sacrifice, of the beginning of cities, and of the beginning of arts and trades.

The Meaning of the Story.

Like the story of the Garden of Eden, we cannot accept it all as true history; but, also like that story, it tells us things which have been true from the beginning of the world. One of these truths is that no man is happy if he is hidden from the face of God. It is his own sin which drives him away from God, who is Perfect Goodness, or which hides the face of God from him. It is man's doing, not God's. Can you find some other truths in the story? It is because these old Bible legends have so much helpful moral truth in them that they have been told and loved for nearly three thousand years.

IV. Noah and the Flood.

After Cain had gone into the land of Wandering, Adam and Eve had other children; and in the fifth chapter of Genesis we have a long list of the names of their descendants. It is told of them that they lived much longer than men do now. Most of them lived to be over nine hundred years old. The most noted of these men was Enoch. He was said to be so good that God did not let him grow old and feeble and die, but *translated* him; that is, took him away from the earth alive. His life is told in one short verse: "And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him." Another famous name is Methuselah, Enoch's son, who, it is said, lived longer than any other man,—nine hundred and sixty-nine years. The grandson of Methuselah, Noah, is the hero of the flood story.

Origin of Flood Stories.

Almost all countries which are watered by great rivers have had times in their history when the rivers have overflowed their banks and the water has washed away whole cities and drowned many people. And so the ancient peoples of Chaldea, Greece, China, and of many other countries all have stories of a great flood which they thought covered *all* the earth. With our present knowledge of the earth we know this could not be so; but, as people in early days did not travel so far from their homes as we do, it is quite possible that it covered all the earth they knew. The Hebrew flood story is the most famous of all, and it probably tells of a great overflowing of the Euphrates River, near which was their early home.

The Two Stories.

You will remember that in the first lesson we learned that many writers had a part in the stories of the Bible as we now read them. You read one story of the creation in the first chapter of Genesis written by the writer who is called P, and

another story in the second chapter by the writer called J. These two stories were kept separate. But in the story of the flood the two accounts are woven together,—some verses are taken from P, then some from J, and so on; and when we separate them, we have two distinct stories of the same event. Let us compare these two stories. You will notice interesting differences between them.

The Cause of the Flood.

The Hebrew story says that between the days of Adam and Noah there were giants on the earth, and that all the people of the earth grew so very wicked that God was sorry he ever made man, and He determined to destroy every living thing in order to begin over again with the one family that had remained good. Read what J says in Genesis 6: 5-8. Notice how P tells the same thing in verses 9-13. What do you think of this idea of God? It was many years before men learned that God never makes mistakes and never needs to repent.

The Ark.

Read J's story of how Noah was to be saved in Genesis 7: 1-5. Do you think that in seven days Noah could have gathered together fourteen of every animal on the whole earth? This story by J does not tell us anything about how the ark was made, but P gives us a full description of it, which you will find back in chapter 6: verses 14-22. How does this story differ from the other? A cubit is about twenty inches. Can you estimate the size of the ark? Do you think it could have held all these animals and all the food they would need?

The Flood.

When the ark was ready and all had been gathered into it, the flood came. You must select the verses very carefully to separate the stories. We will read J's story first, in this order: Genesis 7, verses 10, 7, 8, 9; then skip to the last clause in verse 16. Now read P's account in this order: verses 6, 11, 13-15, and the first half of verse 16.

How long did the flood last, and how great was it? Again read the J story first in verses 17, 22, 23. You will find that

the other story tells us more about the extent of the flood and makes it last longer. Read it in verses 18-21 and verse 24. Do you think it would be possible for water to be deep enough on the earth to cover the highest mountains? How high are the highest mountains? Which of these two accounts is the more possible? The P story was written many years after the J story. This difference shows how stories can grow as they are passed on through the years.

How did Noah find out when the flood ended? The account by J is very famous. Read it in Genesis 8: 6-12 and only the last half of verse 13. P says nothing of this, but he tells us how the ark at last grounded on Mount Ararat. Read his account in verses 1-5 and 14-18.

God's Promise to Noah.

Then J tells us that Noah offered a sacrifice of thankfulness to Jehovah, and Jehovah promised that he would never send another flood. Read his story in Genesis 8: 20-22. It was in order to have animals for this sacrifice that J said Noah took so many of them into the ark. P says nothing about this sacrifice, but from him we have the beautiful story of "the bow in the cloud." Read about this in Genesis 9: 12-16.

The Flood as a Punishment.

Let us consider for a moment the cause given by these two writers for the flood. In early days, as we have said, when a great disaster occurred, people believed it was sent by God as a punishment for some sin. We shall find this thought all through the early stories of the Bible, and even to-day ignorant people sometimes have this idea. When Jesus came, he taught that God did not send such disasters as punishments, and since then we have learned that they are the result of great laws of nature which are necessary for the growth and very existence of life on the earth. Men are also learning how to avoid being harmed by the working of these laws.

V. The Tower of Babel.

Turn to the tenth chapter of Genesis, and read the first verse. The Hebrews say that all the nations of the world descended from Noah's three sons, and in the rest of this chapter they give us a long list of their descendants. Only one of these persons has any story told of him. This one was Nimrod. In the country where these people lived were many dangerous beasts,—lions, tigers, wolves, serpents,—and Nimrod was so brave and successful in defending men and cattle from them that a proverb was made about him. Read it in Genesis 10: 8, 9. Nimrod became a great man, "a mighty one in the earth." Perhaps this means he became a powerful chief. He established a kingdom, and built cities in the land of Shinar. One of these cities was Babel, or Babylon. Find it on the map near the Euphrates River. In what direction is it from Mount Ararat?

The Great Tower.

Babylon grew to be a wonderful city, and though it is now in ruins, there are many records of its magnificence. Just outside the city are the remains of an enormous unfinished tower of brick, which, the records say, was the foundation for a great temple to the Babylonian god. This ruin as it now stands covers a space 150 feet square, and rises nearly three hundred feet high, and, since the surrounding country is very flat, it can be seen for miles around. The people call it the "mountain of Nimrod." Let us now turn to the story which the Hebrews tell about this ruin.

Read Genesis 11: 1-4. What does this story say was the reason for the building of the city and tower? The Hebrew Rabbis have another tradition, not in the Old Testament, which says that the tower was built for a place of safety in case there should be another flood, and it was to reach up to heaven to prop up the sky, so it would not fall again and drown them.

What early and mistaken idea about God do you find in

verse 5? What other stories have this same thought? Who is the writer of them?

Then the story says Jehovah was afraid that these men who before had been simple shepherds would become as wise as Himself, and He was displeased with what they were doing. Verses 6 and 7 tell what He did to punish them. The Rabbi tradition spoken of before says that when the tower had been built seventy miles high Jehovah sent seventy angels down to earth, who scattered seventy languages among the people, so they could not work together to build it any higher, and the early Hebrews were the only ones who were allowed to keep the original language which Jehovah taught to Adam and Eve.

The Beginning of Nations.

After Jehovah had confused the language in the city, what happened? Verse 8. What does verse 9 say about the name of the city? The Hebrews thought the word *Babel* meant *confusion* because their ancestors, the Arameans, who lived north of Babylon, had in their language a word *babil* which means *confusion*. But the name given to the city comes from the Babylonian language, and really means *Gate of God*.

So in this story the ancient Hebrews explained how there were so many different nations and languages in the world, and because these different languages prevented men from understanding each other and made it difficult to do business together, they thought it must be a punishment for some sin. What did they say was the sin? The early Hebrews were shepherds and led a nomadic life. Do you think the writer of this story approved of cities? If men had always lived as shepherds, or as the Arabs do, and never gathered into communities, would the world have been as civilized as it is now? How does living in communities help?

Do you think that different languages made people separate, or did the separation come first? The people of England and Germany speak very different languages, yet they are both descendants of the Anglo-Saxons and once had the same language. What is the true reason for the difference in language? What do you think is the real cause of the scattering of people?

VI. Abraham and Lot.

You learned in the last lesson the explanation the Hebrews gave of the beginning of different nations and different languages. The Bible writers now begin to tell us of the heroes of their own nation. Turn to the map and find north of Babylon, near the Euphrates River, a city called Haran. In this city lived a man named Terah, a descendant of Noah's oldest son, Shem, and he had three sons, Abraham, Nahor, and Haran. Haran had a son named Lot, who of course was Abraham's nephew. Abraham was the founder of the Hebrew nation, and later Hebrews liked to tell stories of his bravery and goodness, just as the early English people used to tell them of King Arthur.

The Emigration of Abraham.

The people who occupied this region between the two great rivers were called the Chaldeans. They worshiped the sun and moon and stars, and Abraham was probably brought up to do so too. But when he was seventy-five years old, he came to believe that there was a Being who ruled them,—the One who made them,—and he would worship Him. But he could do this better if he went into a new country away from the old religion and the people who believed in it, and he thought God told him to go. The writers of the Old Testament stories often tell us that God spoke to men and told them what He wished them to do, but He spoke to them then just as He speaks to men now,—by putting the thought into their minds. And because men of those days had not learned that God sends only good thoughts, they sometimes said that He told them to do things which we know He could not have said.

Turn to the twelfth chapter of Genesis and in verses 1-3 read what Abraham thought God told him to do. What did he believe God would do for him there? Read how Abraham obeyed: verses 4-7. What does it show about Abraham's faith in God's care that he should leave his own land and

people to go into a country he knew nothing of? Find Shechem on the map, far to the southwest of Haran. What river did Abraham have to cross? It is because he crossed this river that his descendants were called "Hebrews," for the word *Hebrew* means *crossed over*. The land of Canaan was peopled by rude, warlike, idolatrous tribes of which we shall often read. Though the later Hebrews believed that God gave this country to Abraham for his descendants, it was many years before these tribes were conquered.

When Abraham reached Shechem, he found a famine in the land. There was not food enough for his cattle and sheep, and he went on toward the south. But wherever he pitched his tent, he built an altar to Jehovah. In later years the Jews revered as sacred these places where they said God talked with Abraham, and often worshiped and offered sacrifices in them. Find on the map the place mentioned in verse 8. At last the famine drove Abraham and Lot as far south as Egypt.

Lot's Choice.

When the famine was over, Abraham and Lot returned to Bethel. But their flocks had so increased that there was not room for them all in the most fertile places, and the herdsmen frequently quarreled for the best spots. How would most people of ancient times have settled such a question? Read what Abraham did in Genesis 13: 1-9.

The land near Hebron is very high, and from that spot one can look over the surrounding country. To the eastward, around the Jordan River, the region is rich and fertile, while to the north and south it is mountainous and rocky. Which land did Lot choose? Verses 10-13. Abraham was the older man, and could rightly have taken the fertile land, leaving the rest to Lot. What does this little incident tell about the characters of the two men?

But Lot's selfish choice was not a wise one, as you will see from verse 13. We shall read soon of the trouble that came to him. After Lot had gone, the story tells us that Jehovah spoke to Abraham and made him two promises, which you will find in verses 14-17. Then Abraham with his own flocks and

servants settled in what place? Verse 18. Find this place on the map. We shall often read of it. The city of Sodom where Lot went was destroyed in a way we shall learn of later. No one knows where it was. It is supposed, however, that what is now the bottom of the Dead Sea was once a fertile plain, and that Sodom was one of the cities on this plain.

Abraham saves Lot.

Although Lot had been selfish in his dealings with Abraham, when he got into trouble awhile after Abraham did not think of the danger to himself and hurried to help him. There came to Sodom from the East four kings with their armies, and they defeated the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah and sacked their cities. The kings of these two cities fled and hid, but Lot was carried away a captive. Read what Abraham did when he heard of it: Genesis 14: 11-16. Find Damascus on the map, and see what a long pursuit Abraham had.

The people whom Abraham captured from the Eastern kings according to the custom of the time, he had a right to keep for slaves, and the valuables he had taken could be his also. Let us see what he did with them. As he returned, he was met by Melchizedek, king of Salem (now Jerusalem), who gave him bread and wine, and blessed him. He was believed to be a holy man, and Abraham gave one-tenth of his booty to him. Then the king of Sodom met Abraham, and begged him to keep the cattle and the plunder, but to give the captives their liberty. Read Abraham's reply in Genesis 14: 20-24.

Abraham's Character.

Abraham was a hero of the best type,—true to his ideals, even though he had to seek a new home to live up to them, full of faith and trust in God's care for him, self-sacrificing, generous, brave, honorable, magnanimous. Although the "Golden Rule" was not taught by Jesus till hundreds of years later, Abraham's life was ruled by the principle contained in it. The great aim of his life is the aim of every good man and woman to-day. Can you tell what it was?

VII. The Destruction of Sodom.

In what city did Lot live? What have you learned about the inhabitants of this city? Genesis 13: 13. What kind of region does the Genesis writer say it was when Lot went there? Genesis 13: 10. Now find on the map the great Salt or Dead Sea. Somewhere on its edge was the ancient city of Sodom. Some say that the sea now covers the spot where Sodom and other ancient cities stood.

For many centuries the region about this sea has been barren and desolate, and there are many indications of volcanic eruptions. But occasional spots of rich vegetation seem to indicate that at one time all the region was fertile. There still are about the Dead Sea pools of bitumen, mixed with petroleum, or "slime pits," as our story calls them, and sulphur springs. All of these are very combustible, and would cause frequent subterranean fires and volcanic explosions. The Hebrews tell of one of these eruptions in this story of Sodom and Gomorrah when several cities were destroyed. They say it happened while Lot lived there. From what you have learned of early ideas, what do you think they would believe was the reason for such a terrible disaster?

Abraham pleads for Sodom.

The story begins with another beautiful picture of Abraham, and it gives us a very clear idea of how courteously and kindly the stranger is treated in the East. Read this story in Genesis 18: 1-8. You will notice that Abraham did not sit at the table with his guests, but served them himself. This custom is still found in the Orient.

Then we are told a strange thing. One of Abraham's guests was Jehovah Himself. What was the reason of the visit? Verses 16-21. What wrong thought of God did the writer of this story have? Would God need to "come down" to see the sin of the city? What other stories show this idea of God as walking and talking with men? Who does it show is the writer of this story?

When Abraham heard of Jehovah's intention to destroy Sodom, of whom would he think? And so Abraham pleaded with Jehovah not to destroy the good people with the wicked. Read what the story says Jehovah finally promised him, verses 22-33. What do you think of the writer's idea of Jehovah in this passage? Would God be less merciful than Abraham?

The Destruction of Sodom.

When the two angels reached Sodom, they saw Lot sitting near the city gate, and Lot arose and welcomed them, and begged them to spend the night at his house. "And he urged them greatly; and they turned in unto him, and entered into his house, and he made them a feast," as Abraham had done. When morning came, the angels had learned that there were not even ten good men in the city. Read the account of their warning to Lot and his escape: Genesis 19: 12-22.

Near one end of the Dead Sea is a little oasis which stands out in marked contrast to the barrenness around it. Here Zoar was supposed to be situated. Verses 20 and 21 give the reason why this land is not desolate like the rest.

What especial command did the angels give Lot as he fled? Verse 17. Now read the story of the destruction of the cities in verses 23-28. How do you suppose such a curious story as that of Lot's wife came to be told? On account of the extreme saltiness of the sea everything about it is covered with a salty crust, and off to the southwest are curious cliffs of rock-salt. The action of the weather has caused pieces to break away, and some of these have been worn into shapes that resemble the human form, just as we have rocky formations like "The Old Man of the White Mountains."

So Lot was saved, and settled in the city of Zoar. In later lessons we shall read of the Moabites and Ammonites, who occupied the region east of the Jordan River. They were said to be the descendants of Lot's two daughters who escaped with him.

The Purpose of the Story.

We have found some ideas in this story that are so wrong that we know some parts cannot be true. But, as in others

we have read, the writer had a deeper purpose than just to tell the story. He wished to teach the great truth that God punishes sin and wickedness. The history of all the ages teaches that sin does destroy nations and people, though not, we know now, in just the way this writer thought. Luxury, vice, dissipation in a nation destroy the physical and mental and moral strength of its people, and it is a part of God's great law of progress that when a nation becomes unfit to carry on God's work in the world, a stronger and better people shall conquer it and take its place.

VIII. Abraham's Children.

You will remember that when Abraham first came into this new country, Jehovah had told him it should belong to his descendants forever. But during all these years Abraham had had no children, so he had begun to doubt this promise, and planned to leave all his wealth to his head servant, Eliezer, who had been born in his house. But one night he dreamed that God came to him, and told him to look at the stars and see if he could number them. And then God promised him that his descendants should be as many as the stars in the sky.

Abraham's Two Wives.

In those days it was the custom for rich chiefs and rulers to have several wives, and this was not thought wrong, as people have since learned it to be. But even then it caused much trouble and unhappiness, as we shall see. When Abraham was over eighty years old and still had no children, his wife, Sarah, urged him to marry her slave girl, Hagar, an Egyptian. Hagar's children, she said, she would adopt and love as her own. This was not an uncommon thing in early times, but the slave girl still remained a slave. So Abraham did as Sarah asked, and after a while Hagar had a son, whom she named Ishmael. But, instead of peace and joy in the family, Sarah became very jealous and envious of Hagar, and did not treat her so kindly as before. When Ishmael was still a young boy, Sarah herself was made happy with a son of her own, whom she called Isaac. But still she was jealous of Hagar.

Sarah's Jealousy.

Read how she showed this jealousy when Isaac was between two and three years old: Genesis 21: 8-10. The word "mocking" in verse 9 means *playing*. Read what Abraham thought of this request: verse 11. But the story says God told Abraham to send them away, and He made Abraham a promise about Ishmael's future: verses 12 and 13. We shall notice

later why the writer of the story thought God would approve of such an act. So Abraham sent them away, and Hagar started toward her old home in Egypt. Read the story of what happened to them while they were in the desert: Genesis 21: 14-21.

The Arabs claim descent from Ishmael, and at one time they were a powerful people, ruling a large part of the Mediterranean region. Their religion, the Mohammedan, is one of the great religions of the world, but it has never had the greatness and beauty of the Jewish and the Christian religions.

The Reason for the Story.

When these stories were first told, there lived in the desert country to the south wandering tribes of Arabs, Bedouins, who were evidently of the same race as the Hebrews. But, though the Hebrews admitted that they were closely related, they were so proud of their race that they would not recognize the Ishmaelites as their equals. So this story made the Ishmaelites the descendants of the slave wife, while the Hebrews were said to be the descendants of the free wife whom Abraham loved best. Why did they have Abraham drive Hagar away? Because they believed that of all the nations of the earth God had chosen them to be His favored people. Many of the stories to come tell how God selected one in each generation for His favor, while the others were rejected. This thought was a wrong one, of course, but, since it is through the Jews that the largest and noblest knowledge of God has been given to the world, they have in one sense been a "chosen people."

Human Sacrifice.

In the land from which Abraham came and in the tribes among which he now lived, it was not uncommon for men to sacrifice their own children, thinking it would please God. This custom would never have existed if the people had not believed that God was an enemy to man and that they could always be trying to soften His anger, which they could do by sacrificing the most precious thing they possessed. The Hebrews very soon gave up this horrible custom, and they tell a wonderful story of how God taught Abraham that He did

not wish such sacrifices. You have noticed in all these stories how Abraham's whole desire was to do what Jehovah wished him to do.

Abraham's Temptation.

When Isaac had grown to be quite a lad, Abraham thought that he would show his devotion to Jehovah by sacrificing his son. Read the story of Abraham's obedience to what he thought was God's will: Genesis 22: 1-13. What a test this was of Abraham's love for Jehovah! For Isaac was his only son, the heir to all his possessions, and his successor as chief of the tribe. In those days it was thought to be a terrible misfortune for a man to have no sons to inherit his name and property. Do you think God spoke out of heaven, as verse 12 says? How do you explain the verse? In those times almost every coincident or unusual thing was considered a sign from God. So when Abraham saw the ram caught in the bushes, it seemed to him that God had put it there as a sign that the ram should be sacrificed instead of Isaac. Then the story says that God was pleased with Abraham's willingness to obey, and the previous promise to Abraham was made again. Do you remember what it was? Verses 15-19. Thus the Jewish writer tells how God showed Abraham that He did not wish such sacrifices.

The Sacrifice God Requires.

We have learned now that God does not require sacrifices even of animals. But there are often great sacrifices which He requires of us. Can you think of some noble ways in which parents have sacrificed their children to God? As, for instance, urging them to undertake some great life-work a long way from home, knowing that they may perhaps never see them again? And, in the New Testament, Paul, an apostle of Jesus, says we must offer ourselves to God as a living sacrifice, holy and well pleasing to Him. What does this mean?

You have now read many stories about Abraham. What qualities had he which made him a great and noble man? He has been called the "friend of God" and the "Father of the Faithful." What effect must it have on a people to have such a man as their ideal?

IX. Isaac and Rebekah.

When Isaac was born, Abraham and Sarah were very old, and, after Isaac had grown to be a man, Sarah died. All these years Abraham had not owned any land in Canaan. Hebron, the city where he had lived and where God had appeared to him, belonged to the "children of Heth." But he wished to buy a place in which he might bury his wife and which should be his family tomb. Read his request and how it was answered in Genesis 23: 1-6. What does this reply show of the regard in which Abraham was held by his neighbors?

Although he appreciated their offer, he did not wish to accept it. What did he suggest? Verses 7-9. Why would this place be of special interest to Abraham? Read of Ephron's generous offer and of Abraham's final purchase: verses 10-20. Locate Hebron on the map. The Mohammedans, who now hold the country of Palestine, also revere the memory of Abraham. What was once Hebron they call el-Khaliel, or the "city of the friend of God." They have erected a mosque, which is jealously guarded, over the spot where this cave is supposed to be, and in which are also said to be buried Abraham, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob, his wife Leah, and Joseph.

Eliezer's Errand.

What had been Abraham's great desire since he had been in Canaan, and what promise did he think God had made him? All this time Isaac had not been married, and, now that Abraham was old, he wished to see Isaac wisely married before he died. In those days, as in Eastern and some European countries now, young men and women were not allowed to choose for themselves whom they should marry: it was arranged by the parents. So Abraham called his head servant, whom he greatly trusted, and told him where to go to get a wife for Isaac. Read Genesis 24: 1-4. What country was it? What relatives had Abraham there?

This servant was Eliezer, of whom you heard in the previous lesson. What do you know of Abraham's regard for him? But Eliezer was fearful that the woman he should select might not care to come to this far land and would wish Isaac to come to her. What did Abraham say about this? Verses 5-9. Why should Abraham care so much? So Eliezer started with presents, as was the custom of the time: verses 10, 11. Trace his journey on the way from Hebron by way of Damascus to Mesopotamia. Why should he take this route instead of going in a direct line?

Eliezer meets Rebekah.

Eliezer reached Haran at evening, when it was the custom of the maidens of the city to draw water from the well outside the gates. In the days we are reading of, people believed that God sent signs to help them to decide important matters. So Eliezer asked God for a sign to aid him in selecting the best wife for Isaac. What sign did Eliezer ask for? Verses 12-14. The Oriental law of hospitality and kindness obliged her to give drink to Eliezer, but it did not require her to water his camels. If she offered to do this, what would it tell Eliezer about her character? We now call such a belief in signs superstition, but Eliezer's desire and prayer for God's guidance in his important task are worthy of our respect and imitation.

No sooner had Eliezer finished his prayer than a beautiful girl named Rebekah came to the spring to fill her pitcher. Eliezer ran to meet her, and asked her for a drink from her pitcher. What did she answer? Verses 17-21. So Eliezer knew this was the maiden he had prayed for. She proved to be the grand-daughter of Abraham's brother. What conversation passed between Eliezer and Rebekah? Verses 22-27.

Arrangements for the Marriage.

Of course, Rebekah went at once and told her brother who had come to them. How did he receive Eliezer? Verses 28-33. What did Eliezer tell Laban about his master's wealth? Verses 35, 36. Then Eliezer told how Abraham had sent him to his own people for Isaac's wife, and how God had helped him in selecting Rebekah. And Laban, too, felt that it must be

God's will that Rebekah should go back with Eliezer. Then Eliezer gave the magnificent wedding presents he had brought, not only to Rebekah, but to her brother and her mother also, as was the custom. For in those days a wife was really bought from her family. Read verses 50-60. What do you think the blessing of Rebekah's relatives means? You will notice that Rebekah was not asked if she were willing to go, but whether she would wait a few days or go at once. What did she answer?

Rebekah meets Isaac.

So Rebekah went away with Eliezer, and came to the country where Isaac dwelt. While Eliezer had been gone, Abraham had died, and was buried in the cave which he had bought from Ephron. So Isaac was now rich and the chief of the tribe. But he was very lonely until Rebekah came. Read of the meeting between them in verses 61-67.

This story gives us a very clear idea of the marriage customs of the East, but the finest picture in it is that of Eliezer, the trusted servant. The relationship between master and servant in Abraham's time was very intimate and beautiful, and Eliezer was entirely worthy of the confidence Abraham placed in him. Can you think of some instances in the story that prove this?

X. Jacob and Esau.

We have many interesting stories of Isaac's father, Abraham, and many of Isaac's son, Jacob, but the Bible tells us almost nothing of Isaac himself. Even in the story of Isaac's marriage, the hero was Eliezer. Isaac must have been a quiet, good man, but it seems as if he could not have been so great as his father. We are told of him, however, that he became very rich, and that his flocks and servants were so many that the Philistine tribes which owned the land became envious. They annoyed him, and kept water from his flocks by filling up the wells that Abraham's servants had dug for them throughout the region. And at last, when the Philistines insisted that Isaac should leave their country, he went south and settled in Beersheba, where he built an altar to Jehovah.

The Two Brothers.

Isaac and Rebekah had been married a long time before they had any children. Then two children, Jacob and Esau, were born to them. They were twins, but, because Esau was born a little before Jacob, he would be his father's successor as chief of the tribe and would have a double share in the property. The two boys were very different in appearance, and, when they grew up, in their tastes and dispositions also. Esau's skin was rough and hairy, while Jacob's was smooth. Esau liked the hunter's wild life, and spent his days wandering about the fields and mountains, sleeping in the open air. He had grieved his parents by marrying two wives from the Canaanite tribe of Hittites. Jacob was of a quiet nature, and preferred to remain at home, tending the flocks and sleeping in his tent.

Turn to the twenty-fifth chapter of Genesis, and read verses 27 and 28. Do you think this was a good reason for Isaac's preference for Esau? Why do you suppose Rebekah loved Jacob best? It could not have been a very happy family, for, besides this favoritism of the parents, we shall see that Jacob

was envious of his brother's position as the eldest son, and hence the chief heir.

The Birthright and Blessing.

Very soon this envy led Jacob to a very base act. Read the account of it in verses 29-34. What is your opinion of Esau's answer in verse 32? If you will make two words of *birthright*, it will explain just what it was,—the property and title that were his by right of earlier birth. And he sold it for a dish of red bean soup! What does this act show about Esau's character? What does it indicate about Jacob's character, that he should take such advantage of his brother's hunger and reckless, careless disposition?

But the bargain between Esau and Jacob would not alone be enough to put Jacob into his brother's place as heir. It needed his father's death-bed blessing. Esau was his favorite son as well as the eldest. How was Jacob to obtain this blessing? Jacob was the favorite of his mother, and she helped him to deceive his father in order to get it. Perhaps she thought that Jacob was a better man to be chief of the tribe than the wild, careless Esau, with the heathen wives. He undoubtedly was; but would this make her deception any less mean and wrong?

Now turn to Genesis 27, and read verses 1-4. While Esau was away on this errand of love, Rebekah made her plans. What were they? Verses 5-10. Jacob, however, feared that the plan would not work, and that his father would recognize him because his skin was not rough like Esau's. But Rebekah was determined that Jacob should be his father's heir, and she devised a way of deceiving him. Read her plan in verses 11-17. How did it succeed? Verses 18-29. Thus Jacob stole Esau's blessing and was made his father's heir. In those days, people laid great value on a blessing or a curse. They believed that it really made a difference in their future prosperity. Once given, it could not be taken back, so there was now no chance for Esau to secure it. Read how Isaac and Esau felt about this trick that had been played upon them: verses 30-35.

Esau's Regret and Resolve.

Then, when it was too late, Esau realized and regretted what he had done in an impulsive moment, when he was hungry. But, in spite of his roving habits, he loved his father, and he begged for some little blessing. His father had given Jacob all. What was left for Esau? Verses 36-40. What does this blessing mean? Do you suppose this would please Esau? Would what Isaac could say affect God's care of his two sons? Esau then hated Jacob, and resolved to kill him; but again Rebekah helped her favorite son. Verses 41-45. How did she get Isaac's consent for Jacob to go? Verse 46. And, because Isaac was so grieved with Esau's marriage to foreign wives, he blessed Jacob again and let him go where he might find a wife among his own relatives. Read what Esau did then: Genesis 28: 6-9.

Two Types of Men.

Esau and Jacob are types of men we find everywhere,—one, quick-tempered, hasty, and thoughtless, but with many good qualities; the other, selfish and crafty, driving a hard bargain and seizing every opportunity to profit himself. Which kind of man succeeds better in the world? Does a man like Jacob, even if successful, gain the love and respect of his fellow-men? Does wealth or regard for others bring the greater happiness? As we shall see, Jacob was a religious man: he offered sacrifices to Jehovah and prayed to Him. Was he a hypocrite? He would be called so now, but we must judge him by the knowledge that people had then. They had not learned that God wanted more than mere form of worship. It was not till many years later that the great prophets Amos and Micah sternly told the Hebrews that God cared for a good life more than for sacrifices. Read what they said in Amos 5: 21-24 and in Micah 6: 6-8.

XI. Jacob in Laban's Household.

In the last lesson you learned why Jacob had to leave his home in Beersheba. Where was he going? It was a long journey to take on foot, alone. Who had taken this journey before for Abraham? In which direction would Jacob have to go?

Jacob's Dream.

When night came, Jacob had to sleep on the open ground in the wilderness, with a stone for his pillow, and that night he had a wonderful dream. It is often referred to, and one of our best-loved hymns, "Nearer, my God, to Thee," has been written about it. Read what this dream was in Genesis 28: 10-17. People in those times had a strong belief in dreams. They thought that God Himself frequently spoke to them in this way. Believing this, what effect would such a dream as this be likely to have on Jacob? What could Jacob have meant in verse 16? Is not God everywhere? What have you learned was believed about this in early days? Where did Jacob believe he had left his god?

Then Jacob did a strange thing. Ages ago people of all nations, as some savages do to-day, worshiped sacred stones. They believed that the home of God was in the heavens, but that He sometimes came down to certain places on the earth, and somehow entered into a stone or a tree.

So Jacob thought God spoke to him from the stone, and he worshiped it by pouring oil upon it. And then he made a vow to God. Verses 18-22. Wasn't Jacob trying to make a bargain with God? Why cannot one do this? The Hebrews ever afterwards considered Bethel one of their most sacred places, and for many years Jacob's descendants offered sacrifices beside the rock of which this story is told.

Jacob meets Rachel.

Then Jacob continued his journey toward Haran, to the home of his mother's brother, Laban. His meeting with his

cousin Rachel reminds us a little of the meeting between Eliezer and Rebekah. Read the account of it in Genesis 29: 1-12. How did Laban receive Jacob? Verses 13-15. Now Jacob had fallen in love with Rachel, who was very beautiful, and when Laban asked him what wages he would like, Jacob answered, "I will serve thee seven years for Rachel, thy younger daughter." And Laban was satisfied, for it was better, he said, to give her to Jacob than to a stranger.

Laban deceives Jacob.

So Jacob lived with Laban, and served him seven years for Rachel, and "they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her." When the seven years were over, Jacob claimed his wife. So a great wedding feast was prepared, and the bride, closely veiled as was the custom, was brought to Jacob, who would not see her face until the next morning. When morning came, Jacob found that Laban had tricked him. It was Leah, Rachel's sister, whom he had married.

Then he went in great anger to Laban, and asked him why he had thus deceived him. "Did I not serve thee for Rachel?" asked Jacob. But Laban replied that in their country it was not the custom to let the younger marry before the first-born. When should Laban have told this to Jacob? Then Laban, who was a shrewd man, saw an opportunity of getting more service from Jacob without paying him wages. So he said to him: "Let us finish the week of feasting for this bride, and then I will give you Rachel, and we will feast a week in honor of her marriage. After Rachel's week is over, you shall serve me for seven more years to pay for her." And Jacob had to be content with this arrangement.

The Bargain with Laban.

When these second seven years were over, Jacob longed to return to his home in Canaan with his wives and children. But Laban had fared so well while Jacob had the care of his flocks that he was very unwilling to have him go. Read the conversation between them in Genesis 30: 25-34. So Jacob offered to remain if Laban would give him a share in his

flocks, and Laban agreed. Then Jacob, who had been cheated by Laban when he wished to marry Rachel and had been made to work an extra seven years for her, determined to get the best of Laban. And he managed by deceit and trickery to get possession of the best and strongest of the flocks, and he became a richer man than Laban, with "large flocks and maid-servants and men-servants and camels and asses." And all this time Laban had been trying to get ahead of Jacob.

The Flight from Haran.

One day, when six years had gone by, Jacob overheard Laban's own sons talking about him. He found that they were envious of his wealth, and they were suspicious of him. He then noticed that Laban was not friendly, "his countenance was not toward him as before." So he decided to return at once to Canaan, and, calling his wives to him, he told them how their father and brothers hated him for the prosperity God had given to him, and that now he must return with them to his own country. Read how they slipped away without letting Laban know: Genesis 31: 14-21.

The teraphim which Rachel stole were the household idols which she and her family believed were a protection to the house they were in, and she wanted them for her new home in Canaan. Although she believed the god of Jacob had prospered him, she also believed in the power of her father's idols.

Was Jacob right in thinking God had given him his prosperity? What would we nowadays say of a man who became rich by cheating in business and who piously said that God had helped him? The reason people could believe so then was because they thought, if a man had such good things as riches and health and children, it must be because God was pleased with him, while sickness and poverty and childlessness were signs of God's displeasure. So, according to their ideas, it was not at all inconsistent for one to be a dishonest man and a religious man at the same time. What better ideas have you learned the prophets taught in later years

XII. Jacob's Return to Canaan.

We have learned how twice in his life Jacob's wrong-doing obliged him to leave his friends, in fear of their anger. From whom did he flee the first time? From whom the second?

The Pursuit.

Jacob had been gone three days when the news of his departure came to Laban, who immediately gathered together his men and followed. But it was seven days before Laban overtook Jacob in the mountains of Gilead, just east of the Jordan River. Find them on the map. And Laban said to Jacob: "What hast thou done, that thou hast stolen away unawares to me? Wherefore didst thou flee secretly, and didst not suffer me to kiss my sons and my daughters? And now, though thou wouldest needs be gone, because thou sore longedst after thy father's house, yet wherefore hast thou stolen my gods?" Was Laban unreasonable in these questions?

Jacob's excuse to Laban was that he went away secretly because he feared Laban would not allow him to take away his wives with him. And as for the teraphim, Jacob did not know that Rachel had taken them, so he gave Laban full permission to look everywhere for them, saying, "With whomsoever thou findest thy gods, he shall not live." So Laban looked into all the tents, among all the household stuff, but he could not find them, for Rachel had hidden them in the saddle of her camel, and was sitting upon them.

Then Jacob was angry with Laban, and reproached him for his suspicions. He reminded Laban of how faithfully he had served him and what a hard master he had been. "These twenty years have I served thee," he said. "That which was torn of beasts, I bare the loss of it; of my hand didst thou require it, whether stolen by day or stolen by night." What else did Jacob say? Genesis 31: 41, 42. But he did not say anything about his own trickery and cheating of Laban. To his mind, his success in it proved that his god was with him.

When Jacob had ended his reproaches, Laban feared that perhaps he had been unjust and over-suspicious; and, after all, his daughters were Jacob's wives, and they should part friends. So they made a solemn agreement of friendship, and, as the custom was, set up a cairn or heap of stones on the spot as a witness of it. Read the promises they made each other: Genesis 31: 43-55.

The Crisis in Jacob's Life.

Even though peace was made with Laban, Jacob's mind was not at rest. He must now meet Esau. Why was he afraid to meet him? During these twenty years Esau had become a rich, powerful Bedouin chief of the land of Seir. He had horses and flocks in great numbers and four hundred men in his service. If he still felt angry, Jacob was powerless against him. Read what Jacob did: Genesis 32: 3-8. Did Jacob show repentance for his wrong to Esau in his prayer? Verses 9-12.

Then Jacob prepared a splendid present for Esau, hoping that, if Esau intended harm, this would buy his good-will. Read how he arranged it to make a great impression upon Esau: verses 13-21.

That night Jacob sent his wives and their families across the small river, called the Jabbok, into a safe place, and he remained alone to think. The Hebrews tell a strange story of this night in Jacob's life. Read it in Genesis 32: 22-30. Can such a story as this be true? Why? Let us see what meaning we can find in it.

As Jacob sat alone, dreading the meeting with Esau on the morrow, he probably thought over all that had happened during his past life,—his wronging of his brother, his deceit to his father, his trickery with Laban,—and his conscience at last troubled him. Should he go on in these old ways, or should he hereafter be honorable and generous, as his grandfather Abraham had been? So the good and the bad sides of Jacob wrestled together through the night, and, as the morning came, he realized that the good desires which he had been resisting came from God. Then he resolved that henceforward his better

nature should control his acts, and the peace that came to him with this purpose was like a blessing from God. Always after this he bore the name Israel, as well as Jacob, in memory of this night alone with God. We shall find that hereafter Jacob's life is honorable and gentle.

The Meeting with Esau.

After his night's struggle, Jacob, weary in body, but at peace with God, returned to his company, and that morning he met his brother. Though Esau had been wild and reckless as a youth and now led a Bedouin's roving life, he was good-hearted and generous, and he received Jacob with tenderness and love. Read the story of their meeting in Genesis 33: 1-11. But when Esau proposed that they go on together, Jacob made an excuse for not doing so. What was it? Verses 12-14. Perhaps Jacob did not feel quite at ease with Esau on account of the past, for he did not follow him to Seir, but crossed the Jordan into Canaan. Read where he settled, Genesis 33: 15-20, and find these places on the map.

XIII. Joseph and His Brothers.

After parting with Esau, Jacob went to Shechem, where he bought land. But two of his sons got into a quarrel with the inhabitants of the city, and he moved on toward the south. On this journey his youngest son, Benjamin, was born, and the greatest sorrow of his life came to him. His much-loved wife, Rachel, died.

Jacob's Sons.

In Haran, besides marrying Leah and Rachel, Jacob had taken two slave wives, and he now had twelve sons. But the son he loved best was Joseph, one of the youngest, the son of Rachel, and next to Joseph he loved the little Benjamin, the other son of Rachel. The father very foolishly showed his favoritism for Joseph in many ways, and permitted Joseph to do things that should have been corrected. This caused much trouble in the family. It made Joseph's brothers envy and then hate him, and it made Joseph disagreeable and conceited. What were some of the things which made his brothers hate him? Genesis 37: 1-11. Why should his brothers have been angered by his dreams? In those days, people believed that dreams were sent by God to tell them about the future, so they believed they all had a true meaning. What did they suppose Joseph's dreams meant? What do you think of Joseph's act in telling them? Why did his father "keep this saying in his heart"?

The Brothers' Plot.

Jacob's sons tended their father's flocks, leading them from place to place for pasturage. One day, when they were far away from home and saw Joseph in the distance coming on an errand from their father, they talked over their hatred of him, and they determined to get rid of him. Their plan is told in verses 12-20. Notice in verse 13 that Jacob is called *Israel*. Where did he get this name? But Reuben, Jacob's oldest son,

felt more kindly toward Joseph,—perhaps he thought of his father's sorrow,—and planned to save him. Read verses 21-24. Now read what the brothers did while Reuben was away for a time: verses 25-28. The pieces of silver mentioned were probably shekels, worth about sixty cents each. For what price did they sell their brother? Whom were they hurting by this act besides Joseph?

Verse 28 says that *Midianites* drew Joseph out of the pit. You will remember that these Bible stories are taken from the accounts of earlier writers. Since we read the flood story, we have not been separating them, though most of the stories since have been put together in the same way. One writer says the brothers sold Joseph to the *Ishmaelites*, who took him to Egypt and sold him to Potiphar. The other writer says, in verse 28 (first part only) and verse 36, that the Midianites stole Joseph from the pit and sold him to Potiphar. Read how Reuben felt when he discovered what had happened, and how the brothers planned to hide their guilt from their father: verses 29-35.

Joseph in Egypt.

When Joseph reached Egypt, he was sold to "Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh's, the captain of the guard." And Joseph grew up to be a fine-looking man, "comely and well-favored," and he served Potiphar faithfully. The faults we have seen in him were due to his bringing up, and as a man we find no trace of them. His hard experience taught him a lesson, as it often teaches us to-day. He became a great favorite with his master, and was made his overseer. And as Potiphar prospered through Joseph's able management, he thought it was because Jehovah, Joseph's god, was helping him, and he trusted Joseph and gave into his care all that he had in his house and in the fields. "He knew not aught that was with him, save the bread which he did eat."

Now Potiphar's wife was not true to him. She began to love Joseph better than she did her husband. But Joseph was loyal to Potiphar, and he rebuked her when she spoke to him, and avoided her. This made her very angry, and she lied to

her husband about Joseph, so that Potiphar threw him into prison. But in prison Joseph's manliness and ability made the keeper of the prison respect and trust him. How thoroughly he trusted him you will read in Genesis 39: 21-23.

The Interpreter of Dreams.

Read Genesis 40: 1-8. Then the chief butler told his dream, and Joseph's explanation made him very happy. What was the dream, and how did Joseph explain it? Verses 9-13. Read the request Joseph made of the butler when his dream should come true: verses 14, 15. Then Joseph heard and explained the dream the chief baker had. You will find the account of it in verses 16-19. Were these interpretations right? Verses 20-23. So Joseph, who had been thrown into prison through a woman's treachery, was kept there two years longer on account of a man's ingratitude.

XIV. Joseph, Governor of Egypt.

Pharaoh's chief butler had been restored to favor two years before he remembered his promise to Joseph. What was this promise? Then one night Pharaoh himself had a strange dream, and when he awoke he was much troubled about it. He called together all his magicians and the wise men from all parts of Egypt, but not one of them could explain it. Then the chief butler spoke to Pharaoh, and said, "I do remember my faults this day," and he told Pharaoh about the "Hebrew servant to the captain of the guard," who had interpreted aright his dream and the chief baker's two years before.

Joseph and Pharaoh.

Read how Pharaoh sent for Joseph and told him his dreams: Genesis 41: 14-24. How did Joseph interpret them? Verses 25-32. What river is meant in the dream? After this Joseph advised Pharaoh what to do to prepare for the coming famine. What was this advice? Verses 33-36. Why do you suppose Joseph, a slave, dared to offer advice to a great king? What did Pharaoh think of Joseph's suggestion? Verses 37-45. When people believed that dreams came directly from God to tell them about the future, it is easy to understand how they would regard a man who could interpret these dreams. His knowledge must surely be sent to him by God, and he must be so favored of God that all he did would prosper. So when Pharaoh saw how wisely Joseph spoke, he thought, "Here is the very man."

So Pharaoh heaped upon Joseph every honor in his power to confer,—dressed him as a member of the royal family of priests and married him to one of the highest families in Egypt. The Egyptian name which Pharaoh gave to him means *Nourisher of the Land*, or, as some say, *Giver of Life*. How was this appropriate? The golden collar put upon his neck was the mark of royalty, and was sometimes given by the Pharaoh as a reward for some great public service. An old Egyptian

inscription tells of its being given to a victorious admiral for his courage in battle. The second chariot in which Joseph rode was the position given to the princes of royal rank. So Joseph at thirty years of age became the Grand Vizier or Prime Minister of a great nation. In all the land only Pharaoh had more authority and respect than he.

Joseph's Policy.

Let us see how Joseph fulfilled the requirements of his position. What he did during the years of plenty you will find told in verses 46-49. Then the famine came: verses 53-57. But it was not long before the people had spent all their money. What do you think Joseph should have done then? Read what he did in Genesis 47: 13-20.

So, while Joseph supplied the people with food, he also made Pharaoh very rich and the people very poor. All the land and cattle in Egypt became the property of Pharaoh and all the people became his slaves. But the land of the priests Joseph did not take. Then, when planting time came, Joseph gave the people their seed for sowing, but on the condition that always afterwards one-fifth of every man's harvest should be paid to Pharaoh as hire for the land. And this was the law in Egypt for many years.

What should we think to-day of a ruler who became rich while he made his people poor, as was done in this story? But in ancient times and till recent years, in some countries, a king was believed to have absolute power given him by God, and the rights of the people never occurred to him. So we must judge Joseph by the standards of his time. The faithfulness and energy with which he served in his smaller duties for Potiphar and his greater ones for Pharaoh are what the writer wishes us to notice.

XV. Joseph forgives His Brothers.

Read Genesis 41: 57. Can the last part of this verse be true? What does it probably mean? The famine was in Canaan, too, and after a time Jacob sent his sons to Egypt to buy grain. But Benjamin, his youngest son, he did not allow to go. For, since Joseph was gone, Jacob loved Benjamin the best of all his sons, and he feared some harm might befall him. Why did Jacob love these two best? Joseph knew his brothers at once, but they did not recognize him. He had been only a boy when they sold him into Egypt. Now he was a man thirty-seven years old, and was dressed like an Egyptian of high rank. Would they be likely to guess or believe that this powerful prince was the brother they had sold as a slave?

Joseph meets His Brothers.

Read the story of how Joseph received his brothers: Genesis 42: 6-17. What do you think of this treatment of them? Of course, he knew they were not spies. Why did he do it? Are we not all tempted sometimes to "pay back," till we realize how mean it is and that it hurts ourselves most? What dreams does verse 9 refer to?

After three days Joseph talked again with his brothers. What did he say to them? Verses 18-24. Were they right in thinking this trouble was a punishment for their treatment of Joseph years before? Does it not seem as if their consciences had troubled them? Why did Joseph use an interpreter?

After binding Simeon to hold him as a prisoner, Joseph sent the others away with their bags full of grain. What else did he do? Verse 25. So they came to their father in Canaan, and told him all that had happened to them, and how they must take Benjamin back to free Simeon. Then they opened their sacks, and found each man his money. Verses 35-38. Why were they afraid? Why wouldn't Jacob let them return for Simeon?

The Second Visit.

But after a time the grain they had brought was eaten, and the brothers were forced to go again into Egypt. But they did not dare to go without Benjamin, and the food was needed so much that Jacob finally consented to let him go. They started again for Egypt, taking with them a present of dainties that did not grow in that country. Verses 11-15.

When Joseph saw that his brothers were coming and that Benjamin was with them, he ordered his steward to call them into his house to dine with him. But the brothers could not understand why such a great prince should show them this honor, and they were much afraid that harm was intended to them. Read the story of their treatment by Joseph at this meeting: verses 16-34. This was a strange feast for them. Joseph sat at one table, the Egyptians at another, the brothers at another. Verse 33 tells us that Joseph arranged his brothers according to their ages. They must have wondered how this stranger knew how to do this. Then from time to time he sent dainties from his table to theirs, a customary way of showing courtesy to a guest, but the largest mess was usually sent to the eldest. Here it was sent to the youngest.

When the feast was over, what did Joseph do? Genesis 44: 1, 2. Whose sack would this be? When his brothers had started, Joseph did another strange thing. What was it? Verses 4-10. What shows that they were sure the cup would not be found with them? What kind of cup does verse 5 say it was? You have already learned how people in those days believed in dreams and magic. From the divining cup it was believed one could foretell the future. It was filled with water, and bits of gold or silver were thrown into it. By the shapes these pieces formed, those who had learned how thought they could tell events of the future. Read the story of the finding of the cup and the journey back to Joseph: verses 11-17. Why do you suppose Joseph did this? Perhaps he wished to see if they would treat Benjamin as they had treated him. Do you remember that Judah was the one who had proposed the selling of Joseph to the Ishmaelites? Read the splendid speech he now made, and his generous offer to save his father this new sorrow: verses 18-34.

Then Joseph could control himself no longer, and he told his brothers who he was. When you read the story of this scene, notice how nobly he excused his brothers' crime. Genesis 45: 1-5. What did Pharaoh say when he heard that Joseph's brothers had come? Verses 16-20. Verses 21-28 tell how they went back laden with presents, and told Jacob the good news that Joseph was alive and had become a great man.

Jacob in Egypt.

So Jacob and all his family moved southward to the land of Goshen, and Joseph met them there. Now read Genesis 46: 28-30 and Genesis 47: 1-12. What does this tell you about Pharaoh's regard for Joseph? Find the region on the map which Pharaoh gave to Jacob.

Jacob lived in the land of Goshen for seventeen years, and at the age of one hundred and forty-seven years he died. When he knew he was dying, he called together his sons and blessed them. And he charged them that they should not bury him in Egypt, but should carry his body to the cave in Machpelah and bury him with his ancestors. And when he died, Joseph had him embalmed after the manner of the Egyptians, and when the forty days required for embalming were over, they mourned for him threescore and ten days. Then Joseph and his brothers took the body to Canaan, as they had promised, and with them went many Egyptians from the court to show their respect and love for Joseph by mourning with him. So Jacob's eventful life came to a peaceful and happy end.

Now that Jacob was dead, the brothers were afraid of Joseph. They thought he would surely revenge himself for their wrong of years before. Read Genesis 50: 1-21, and see what a beautiful story our last one of Joseph is. He lived to be an old man, with grandchildren and great-grandchildren, and when he died he was mourned through all Egypt. But though Joseph had lived in Egypt since he was seventeen, he felt it was not the land of Jehovah,—that was in Canaan,—and he made his children promise to carry his body back to the land of his fathers.

XVI. The Birth and Call of Moses.

In the book of Genesis we have been studying the traditions which the later Hebrews told of their forefathers, the founders of their race. Through these stories we have learned how they believed that the land of Canaan, which they afterwards conquered, had really been given to their ancestors for them; and also how they explained the fact that they once lived many years in Goshen, a part of Egypt.

We now come to the second book of the Old Testament, Exodus, and we find that the descendants of Joseph and his brothers no longer lead a free shepherd life, but have been made slaves, and set to work making brick and building cities. The word *Exodus* means *departure*, and the book tells us how the Hebrews escaped from Egypt under the guidance of a great leader called Moses.

In the first chapter of Exodus, verses 8-14, you will find the reason given for this oppression. Rameses II., one of the greatest of the Egyptian Pharaohs, who had magnificent buildings and statues erected throughout Egypt, is supposed to be the one who made slaves of the Hebrews. He conquered many of the tribes east of Egypt and carried them back with him as slaves, and gave them hard work to do. He had so many, we are told, that no Egyptian had to do any heavy labor.

The Young Moses.

This was the condition when Moses was born. In spite of their hard work and the cruel treatment of the Egyptian taskmasters, many Hebrew children were born and grew up; and at last Pharaoh sent out an order that every boy baby should be thrown into the Nile to drown. When Moses was born, his mother determined to try to save him, and for three months she was able to hide him. What she did then you will find told in Exodus 2: 3-10. So Moses was cared for by his own mother, after all, and when he was old enough to leave her care

he was taken into the household of Pharaoh's daughter, who brought him up as an Egyptian prince.

In those days the Egyptian priests were the most learned people in the world, and Moses was taught by them, so that he, too, became a very wise man. But his mother had probably taught him also the religion and traditions of his own people, and perhaps had told him that some time, in some way, he might be able to help them. As Moses grew older, he used to watch his countrymen at their work, and the cruelty with which they were treated made him very indignant. One day he was made so angry that he lost his self-control. Read what happened in verses 11-15. What would this act of Moses show Pharaoh about him?

Find on the map the land of Midian, near the Gulf of Akabah. Here Moses found a home with Reuel, or Jethro. The story of their meeting is told in Exodus 2: 16-21.

The Call of Moses.

For many years Moses lived with Jethro, caring for his sheep. But he must have often thought of his people in Egypt and of ways in which he could help them to escape, and at last he decided that he could and would be the man to save them.

Can you think how Moses' early life would especially fit him for this work? The book of Exodus tells us how the Hebrews thought God told Moses to save them. Find on the map the mountainous country called Horeb. As Moses was feeding his flocks there, the story says, Jehovah spoke to him from a burning bush. You have already learned how early people thought God spoke from trees and stones. Read the story in Exodus 3: 1-10 of Jehovah's call to Moses. But Moses felt that he was not great enough for this work. His objection and Jehovah's answer you will find in verses 11, 12.

Then Moses feared the Hebrews in Egypt would not believe that Jehovah had made him their leader. How did Jehovah tell him he could prove it to them? Exodus 4: 1-9. What excuse did Moses offer next, and how was he answered? Verses 11, 12. Still Moses hesitated, and asked Jehovah to send some one else; and the story says Jehovah became im-

patient and angry because of Moses' modesty, but He told Moses that another should help him. Verses 13-17 tell what each should do.

Moses returns to Egypt.

Then Moses returned to Jethro and asked his permission to go to Egypt: verses 18-20. So Moses returned to Egypt and met Aaron and told him what Jehovah had commanded. How did the people receive his message? Verses 27-31.

We have said that most of these early stories were traditions. We cannot be sure that the statements in them are really true. But with Moses we begin what we know is history, although there is much that cannot be true mingled with the account of what actually happened. It is true, however, that some Hebrew tribes were once subject to Egypt and that a great leader arose, who delivered them and made of them a strong nation. We shall see how nobly and ably Moses did this work.

XVII. Moses and Pharaoh.

The Hebrew story writers tell a wonderful tale of the way the Israelites became free. Let us read their story first, and then we will consider how they got these ideas.

Moses had lived with Jethro for many years, and when he returned to Egypt the Pharaoh who had sought to kill him was dead, and another king ruled over the country. But he, too, oppressed the Israelites. It was Moses' plan to ask Pharaoh's permission for him and his people to go a three days' journey into the wilderness to worship Jehovah, but, when there, to make their escape. The writer of the story says Jehovah told Moses to do this, but we know now that this could not be so. If Moses thought God wished him to lie, he was mistaken. But Pharaoh did not care anything about the god of the Hebrews, and he refused to let them go. Besides this, he made them work harder than ever as a punishment. He required from them the same number of bricks a day as before, but he made them gather their own straw, which before had been brought to them. Exodus 5: 1-21 tells very vividly of this added burden, and how the people blamed Moses and Aaron for it.

The Plagues of Egypt.

Then the story says Moses asked Jehovah what he should do, and Jehovah told him to go to Pharaoh again and prove to him by signs and wonders that their god, Jehovah, was with them and helping them. This is a strange idea, but at the time these stories were written people believed in all kinds of magic, and thought the power to do these miracles was given by their god. So Moses is to prove to Pharaoh that the god of the Hebrews is stronger than the gods of the Egyptians.

What was the first thing Moses did? Exodus 7: 1-13. When this sign did not influence Pharaoh, we are told that Moses, at Jehovah's command, brought a number of plagues to the land of Egypt. Read the account of the first plague in

Exodus 7: 14-25. When Pharaoh still refused, the second plague came: Exodus 8: 1-15. What was the third plague? Exodus 8: 16-19. Notice that the story says this time Pharaoh's magicians could not do what Moses did as they had before. Read the account of the fourth plague in Exodus 8: 20-32. Why does verse 19 say Moses refused to sacrifice in the land of Egypt? The sacrifice of the Hebrews was of cattle or sheep, and these animals the Egyptians worshiped and never killed. Such a sacrifice by the Jews in their midst would certainly be an "abomination" to them. When Pharaoh still refused, what plague was sent? Exodus 9: 1-7. The story of the sixth plague is found in Exodus 9: 8-12. What was the seventh plague? Exodus 9: 22-28. Did Pharaoh keep this promise? Verses 33-35. Then Moses threatened Pharaoh with another trouble if he did not let the Hebrews go, and Pharaoh said that the men might go, but not the women or children or cattle. Then Moses brought the eighth plague upon the Egyptians: Exodus 10: 12-20.

When Pharaoh hardened his heart again, what calamity did Moses bring and what was the result of it? Verses 21-29. The tenth plague was the last, and it was such a terrible one that Pharaoh finally gave his consent for the Hebrews to go: Exodus 11: 1-8 and 12: 29-35. From what we have read you will notice that the writers of these stories had strange ideas of right and wrong and of God's character. What do you think of the idea in 11: 1-3? Did the Israelites intend to return the jewels? Do you think God would tell Moses to deceive Pharaoh by saying they were going only for three days to worship?

Explanation of these Stories.

All the plagues mentioned are calamities which Egypt has often experienced. When the Nile rises in June, on account of certain soil and vegetable matter brought down from the mountains it has a red color for nearly twenty days; hence the story of the river being turned to blood. As Egypt depends upon the Nile for its water supply, any trouble with the water would bring about these other plagues. An abundance of

frogs, enough to be a plague, is not an uncommon occurrence in other parts of the world as well as Egypt. Lice, gnats, flies and beetles in great swarms are not at all infrequent in certain kinds of weather. Plagues among the cattle are not uncommon. Only about fifty years ago one was reported which killed forty thousand cattle. The plague of blains and boils may refer to a disease which frequently breaks out in unhealthy marshy sections of the country.

Thunder-storms with lightning and hail are rare in Egypt, but they are very severe when they do occur. One man who has lived much in Egypt knew of but three in twelve years. Another traveler tells of one which "made day as dark as night." "Prodigious swarms of locusts darkening the heavens and eating up every green thing" have visited the country in all ages. The *chamsin*, a wind bringing great darkness and usually lasting three days, is one of the peculiar phenomena of Egypt; hence "the darkness which can be felt." All through the East, and especially in Egypt on account of its hot climate, there have been pestilences which still occur, causing the death of thousands of human beings and animals. Some such occurrences as these very likely took place about the time that the Hebrews were planning to leave Egypt. These plagues would naturally be in the hot, unhealthful valley of the Nile, while the Hebrews in the more healthful land of Goshen would not feel them. Then in later years, as the Israelites told their children of their life in Egypt and of how they finally became free, after the manner of their time, they said that God had sent the plagues as a punishment to the Egyptians. And so the story was handed down from one generation to another till at last it reached the form in which we read it in the book of Exodus to-day.

XVIII. The Deliverance from Egypt.

All through their history the Hebrews have kept every year, in the month of April, a solemn religious feast which is called the Passover. It has been kept for so many years that no one knows just how it originated. The writers of these stories tried to explain it. The Hebrew name for it, *Pesach*, means *sparing*, they said, and the feast commemorated the *sparing* or *passing over* of the Israelites when Jehovah destroyed the "first-born" of Egypt. At this feast unleavened bread is eaten for seven days, because, the writer said, the Israelites ate this on the night they left Egypt. And so to-day when the Jewish people keep this feast, they do it in memory of their deliverance from Egypt ages ago.

Read what the story says in Exodus 12: 37-42. How many does verse 37 say escaped from Egypt? Who else went with them? Do you think it would be possible for so many to get away in a single night? Would such a number need to be afraid of Pharaoh's army? In later days, when other desert tribes had joined the Israelites, we are told there were only forty thousand men. So this larger number must be an exaggeration. Perhaps the original story said six hundred clans or families.

The Route from Egypt.

Find on the map the cities of Pithom and Succoth and Etham. From Etham there were two routes to the fertile land of Canaan, whither the Jewish writers said Jehovah was leading them, and Moses took the southern route across the Wilderness of Paran. What does Exodus 13: 17-20 say was the reason Moses chose this longer route? Verse 21 tells how the caravan traveled. Eastern caravans still travel in the way the Israelites probably journeyed. A leader goes in front and carries on the end of a long pole a torch which, in ancient days, was usually made of rags soaked in petroleum. This torch gives a thick, heavy smoke which in the clear air of the desert can be seen by the

rear of the caravan even though miles behind. By the bright light which is seen after dark it is possible to make at night the long journeys which are sometimes necessary to reach the springs where the caravan rests. What did the story writer mean his people to realize when he said Jehovah was in the cloud and in the fire?

Pharaoh's Pursuit.

When Pharaoh let the Israelites go, how long did he expect they would be gone? When he found that they did not return what did he do? Exodus 14: 5-9. Notice on the map just how Pi-hahiroth is situated on the edge of the Bitter Lakes. When the children of Israel saw Pharaoh following them, what did they say to Moses? Exodus 14: 10-12. Read Moses' reply in verses 13, 14.

The Great Deliverance.

Moses, from his years of wandering about this region, knew that the tide in the Red Sea rises and falls very suddenly and rapidly, and if a strong east wind is blowing the tide goes out farther and is slower in returning. Many travelers in this region have reported that they have walked at low tide across the upper end of the Sea without danger. So Moses took advantage of the low tide and the east wind and led his followers across in safety. By the time Pharaoh's army had reached the spot the tide was rushing in again, and the story says Pharaoh's army was swallowed up by the waters.

The story we now read of this deliverance is made up of two accounts by J and P, which we have noticed before. J, the earlier writer, says that Jehovah sent an east wind which drove out the waters, so that the Israelites crossed over, while Pharaoh was caught by the returning tide. This natural occurrence would seem a great miracle to many of these people, who had been all their lives slaves in Egypt and had never before seen the tide of the Red Sea.

From what has been said about the plague stories, you can think how the Jews of later years would tell of their marvelous escape. P, who lived four hundred years after always tells a

more wonderful story. He says that at the command of Jehovah Moses stretched out his hand and the sea divided, making a wall on each side, and the Israelites crossed on the road between the waters. Then when Pharaoh's army entered the sea, Moses again stretched out his hand, and the waters closed together, drowning Pharaoh and all his host. Now read the story as it came to be told: Exodus 14: 21-31. Then Moses and the children of Israel sang a song of joy and triumph, and Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron, led the women in a sacred song of thanksgiving: Exodus 15: 20, 21.

Thus Moses delivered his people from their bondage, over three thousand years ago, and ever since that time the Jewish people have held his name in grateful remembrance.

XIX. The Life in the Wilderness.

Find on the map the wilderness between Egypt and Canaan, and the mountainous region of Horeb. In this triangular peninsula the Israelites lived for many years, leading a nomadic life, much as the Bedouins do now. They journeyed from place to place in search of food and water, and pitched their tents of goat's hair beside the springs which they found. It was a life full of danger and hardship. Wild beasts would frequently attack the flocks, which must be protected from them. When food and water were scarce, hostile tribes fought with them for possession of the fertile places and the springs, and at any time might attack the camp, rob them and carry away their wives and children as slaves.

The Years of Wandering.

For forty years, we are told, the children of Israel lived in the desert. The Hebrew writers were fond of using the number *forty* to mean *many*, as we shall frequently see in following lessons. They said that Moses was "forty" years old when he fled from Egypt to Midian, and that he tended Jethro's flocks for "forty" years when Jehovah sent him to free His people.

At first, because they had been in slavery so long, they were weak and cowardly, and often complained of the desert hardships; but by the end of "forty" years their strenuous life in the wilderness under the wise leadership of Moses, made them so strong and courageous and united that the neighboring tribes were afraid of them, and they at last conquered them and reached the land of Canaan, which became the home of their nation.

Very few stories have come to us of these forty years, but those we have show that the Hebrews, in telling of their experiences in later times, felt that Jehovah was caring for them and guiding them. The stories also make plain that Moses was regarded as the representative of Jehovah: whatever he did or said was by Jehovah's wish.

Let us read some of these stories. It seems to have been Moses' plan to lead his people to the mountains of Horeb, where Jehovah had talked with him and told him to save his people. After the Israelites left the Red Sea, they traveled southward three days before finding water, and then they found the water was bitter. Read the story of how Moses made it fit to drink: Exodus 15: 22-26. There are many of these brackish springs in the desert, but wood that contains oxalic acid will sweeten them. Perhaps Moses had learned this while living with Jethro, but to the ignorant Hebrews it seemed like a miracle. What beautiful camping place did they reach next? Verse 27. Find Marah and Elim on the map.

The Supply of Food.

After this, the Israelites continued their journey toward the Sacred Mountain. But the supply of food gave out, and they were angry with Moses. When they lived in Egypt, their food had been supplied to them; now they must seek for it themselves. What did they say to Moses? Exodus 16: 2, 3. What promise did Jehovah make to Moses? Verses 11, 12. What does verse 13 say happened that night to give them food? In the morning they found on the ground a small, white flake, and they asked in wonder "Manhu?" or "What is it?" Read the story of the manna in verses 14-31. An omer is about three quarts. How long does verse 35 say the supply lasted? In the book of Numbers we have the story of the manna and the quails told again. That story says that the people got tired of the manna and cried for meat. Read Numbers 11: 4-10. What does this story say Jehovah told Moses He would do? Verses 18-23. Verses 31, 32 tell how the meat was sent.

You have seen that most of these stories are really based on something that actually happened. It is a fact that many flocks of quails fly across Arabia, Palestine and Italy, and often drop to the ground exhausted with their long journey. The people of the country can then easily catch them. Manna is well known in Southern Europe and Central Asia. It is a kind of gum or honey which oozes from the tamarisk tree.

Toward morning it hardens and is easily gathered, but when the sun comes out it melts. The Israelites doubtless ate it sometimes, as modern Arabs do now when all else fails. As the Hebrews related their desert experiences and tried to emphasize the thought that Jehovah was caring for them, the story gradually reached the form in which we now read it.

Other Desert Stories.

We have another story of the same kind. As the children of Israel traveled on, they reached a place where there was no water, but Moses brought water from a rock by a blow of his staff: Exodus 17: 1-6. The scene of this story is in a mountainous region where streams of water not infrequently spring from crevices in the rocks. Moses from his early wilderness life knew how to recognize and open a crevice to let the hidden water flow out. This is still done by the desert tribes.

At one time the Israelites were attacked by the robber-tribe of Amalekites. Read of the wonderful way in which Jehovah gave Moses the victory: verses 8-13.

The Authority of Moses.

We are told that there were twelve great tribes of the Hebrews, the descendants of Jacob's twelve sons. These tribes were divided into smaller clans or families. Although each clan had its own chief, who decided disputes, as the Arab sheiks do now, Moses was the supreme judge who settled all the more important questions. We have in Exodus the account of how Moses at first settled all troubles himself, but was advised by Jethro to appoint helpers. The story is a long one, taking the whole of the eighteenth chapter of Exodus. Verses 1-12 tell how Jethro came to visit Moses and rejoiced with him "for all the goodness which Jehovah had done to Israel." Verses 13-27 relate how Jethro saw that Moses had too heavy a task for his strength, and how he advised him to choose able men from the tribes to assist him. What do you think of Jethro's advice in verse 21? Why is it necessary to have such men as leaders?

Moses was very strict in his laws and severe in his punishments, as he had to be to make the different tribes, with their tribal loyalty, feel that they were really one people, and to keep them true to the worship of Jehovah which he taught them. In Leviticus 24: 11-23 notice how Moses punished a man who used Jehovah's name profanely. One of Moses' laws was that the Sabbath or seventh day should be a day of rest, sacred to Jehovah. In Numbers 15: 32-36 see how he punished a man for gathering sticks on the Sabbath day.

As has been said, the Hebrews believed that Jehovah spoke to them through Moses, and they tell some stories of how He punished those who rebelled against Moses' authority. Once Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses, saying, "Hath Jehovah indeed spoken only with Moses? Hath He not spoken also with us?" Now Moses was very meek and did not answer them, but Jehovah came down in a cloud and rebuked them for their speech and afflicted Miriam with that fearful disease leprosy. But Moses prayed to Jehovah to heal her, and so she was made well again.

At another time, Dathan and Abiram and two hundred and fifty princes gathered together against Moses and Aaron, saying, "Ye take too much upon yourselves," and they complained that Moses had taken them from a land "flowing with milk and honey" to kill them in the wilderness, and that he had besides made himself a prince over them. And they refused to obey him. Read what happened to the rebellious princes: Numbers 16: 20-33.

These are some of the stories the Hebrews told of Moses and God's care of them in the wilderness. In one way God did give Moses his right to rule, as he gives it to wise and good men now. In what way then did God really care for His people in the wilderness? How does He care for people now?

XX. The Law on Mount Sinai.

What does Exodus 18: 20 say Jethro advised Moses to do? The greatest work Moses did for the children of Israel was to give them those laws which made of them a greater and nobler nation than any other of their time,—laws which have served not only the Jews, but have been the foundation of all Christian laws since. The Jewish people had great regard for their laws, and they said that Jehovah Himself taught them to Moses from Mount Sinai.

Mount Sinai.

Find on the map the region of Horeb, at the head of the Red Sea. It is a wild country,—the mountains are bleak and rocky, and the scene of frequent terrible thunder-storms. Among these mountains is one that for ages had been considered sacred, where Jehovah dwelt. It was near this sacred mountain that Moses received his call to deliver Israel from Egypt; it was to this place he led them, in order to teach them that since Jehovah had kept His promise to free them, He was a god who was faithful and they in turn must be faithful to Him. It was their duty to worship only Him and to obey His laws. It was on this mountain, the later Hebrews said, that Jehovah made known these laws to Moses.

Read Exodus 19: 1-6. What did the people say to this command? Verses 7, 8. Then Jehovah told Moses that in three days He would descend in a cloud upon Mount Sinai and all the people should see the cloud and hear Him tell Moses the law. How does the story say he came? Verses 16-21. But when the people perceived the "thunder and the lightnings, and the voice of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking" they were afraid and "stood afar off." What did they say to Moses? Exodus 20: 19-21. So Moses went up alone and Jehovah taught him the ten great laws which we call the Ten Commandments.

The Commandments.

These ten commandments may be divided into two kinds.

• The first five teach man's duty to God; the second five man's
 • duty to his fellow-men. Read Exodus 20: 1-3. Verse 3 is
 the first commandment. The people of this time believed that
 there were many gods, and the Egyptians worshiped more
 than one. Verse 2 tells why the Hebrews were to worship
 Jehovah only. This was the first step toward our belief that
 there is only one God.

• The Egyptians and most of the desert tribes bowed down
 before idols or images of their gods, and the second command-
 ment was to prevent the Israelites from adopting this dangerous
 custom: verse 4. What was the third commandment?
 Verse 7. This means that the name of God must never be
 used except reverently. How have you read Moses punished
 a man for disobedience of this law? Read the next command-
 ment: verse 8. Verses 9-11 tell why the Sabbath was to be
 kept holy, but these last three verses were not given by Moses.
 The story in the first chapter of Genesis, that God made the
 world in six days and rested the seventh day, was not known
 at the time of Moses. This command is given again in another
 place, and the reason for it there is that the people and the
 animals might have a day of rest. This reason is probably
 the one given by Moses. How did Moses once punish the
 disobedience of this law? The rest of the commandments
 are short ones: verses 12-17. The tenth commandment
 does not mean that we should not want more than we have,
 but that we should not do wrong to any one in order to get it.
 Thirteen hundred years after Moses Jesus summed up these ten
 commandments in two short commands: Matthew 22: 35-40.

Other Laws.

The books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy
 are full of laws which are called the Laws of Moses. Most
 of them were written years after Moses lived, as people found
 they needed them, but because Moses was the first and great-
 est law-giver they were all called by his name. Some of them
 are very old, and it is likely that Moses established rules of

conduct from which these laws gradually grew. Some of them are very interesting. In Exodus 21:2 is a law allowing a Hebrew slave his freedom after seven years. Verses 5, 6 tell how he might stay with his master forever if he wished, and most Hebrew masters treated their slaves so kindly that many stayed. In connection with this read also Deuteronomy 15: 12-15. If a master injured a slave, the slave must be given his freedom: Exodus 21: 26, 27.

Other laws required men to be careful of the property of other persons. One of these is in Exodus 21: 33, 34; others in Exodus 22: 5, 6. In Exodus 22: 25-27 is a law which protects the poor. Kindness to animals is not forgotten: Exodus 23: 4, 5. What does Exodus 23: 9 say about kindness to strangers? Read also verses 22-24.

One of the most interesting of the laws is the one about the seventh, or Sabbatical, year, which was made after the Israelites had settled in Canaan and had fields and vineyards. Just as the seventh day was holy to Jehovah, so was the seventh year. This law you will find in Exodus 23: 10, 11. And in the book of Leviticus we are told that in order that there might be plenty during the seventh year, Jehovah would in the sixth year give three times the usual crop. Then when seven times seven years had passed, the Year of Jubilee should be celebrated. It was to begin on the day of the Feast of Atonement, when the loud trumpet, or jobel, should be sounded throughout the land. In that year the land and vineyards were to rest; and it was to be a year of freedom. All slaves were to be set free, and those who, on account of poverty, had been obliged to sell their land were to receive it back again. Leviticus 25: 8-12 tells about the jubilee year. A part of verse 10 is to be found on the Liberty Bell, which proclaimed on July 4, 1776, the signing of our Declaration of Independence.

These are some of the laws that were a part of the Hebrew religion. And because Moses was the first to teach that Jehovah is a holy God, and justice and kindness and a moral life are required of His worshipers, the whole world, as well as the Jewish nation, should be grateful to Moses.

XXI. The Golden Calf.

When Jehovah had finished giving Moses the laws on Mount Sinai, we are told in Exodus 31: 18 that He gave Moses two tablets of stone with the ten commandments written on them to take back to the people.

When the people found Moses was gone so long, they became impatient, and begged Aaron to make for them a god they could see, such as the Egyptians had. So Aaron made for them a golden calf like those that were worshiped in Egypt. Read how he made it in Exodus 32: 1-6. Then the people worshiped before it with feasting and dancing and shouting, as the heathen nations did before their idols.

But Jehovah saw what they had done and threatened to destroy these ungrateful people. What argument does the story say Moses used to prevent it? Verses 7-14. What wrong thought of Jehovah is in this story? How do you account for the writer having such an idea? What did Moses do when he returned down the mountain and saw the feasting and rioting? Verses 15-20. What do you think of Aaron's excuse when Moses asked him why he had led the people into this sin? Verses 21-24.

Then Moses called for all those who were on Jehovah's side to come to him. What did he then command them to do? Verses 25-29. So Moses punished the people for their idolatry. What did he say to the people the next day? Verse 30. Then Moses went again to Jehovah and begged him to forgive the sin of his people. Read Moses' prayer and Jehovah's reply in verses 31-35. So Moses generously prayed that he might be allowed to share the punishment that Jehovah might send upon them.

The New Tablets of Stone.

What does Exodus 34: 1-5 say Jehovah told Moses to do? Then Moses bowed down before Jehovah and worshiped. And Jehovah told Moses to write on the tables of stone the

commandments He gave him. How long was Moses on the mountain with Jehovah? Exodus 34: 28. What do verses 29-33 say about Moses' appearance when he returned from speaking with Jehovah? Have you ever seen any one whose face seemed to shine with happiness and joy? The story says that Moses had to cover his face with a veil because of the brightness of it.

The Tent of Meeting and the Ark.

After this the command came to Moses to leave Mount Sinai and go toward the fertile land in the north. And whenever the caravan stopped, Moses pitched a sacred tent, where he could go in and pray to Jehovah and where Jehovah told him how to govern the people. The people gave their ornaments of gold and silver and their jewels as gifts to Jehovah and these were used to decorate the tent. Read in Exodus 33: 7-11 the account of how Jehovah came down to the tent in a pillar of cloud and talked with Moses.

When the Israelites left Mount Sinai they carried with them a chest, or ark, which was sacred to Jehovah. The Egyptians used to carry the images of their gods on such arks in their religious processions; and it may be that although Moses would not allow the people to make images of Jehovah, he found that they needed some object to take the place of those images which all other peoples worshiped. The Hebrews seem to have looked upon the ark as the throne of Jehovah, and they believed that wherever they carried it Jehovah went with it to protect it and them. It used to be said that the two tables with the commandments and a pot of manna were kept inside of the ark as a reminder of what Jehovah had done for them and of what they must do for Him. What had He done for them? What had Moses said they must do for Him? It was said in later years Jehovah told Moses when to go and when to stop. When the cloud that rested on the Tent of Meeting was lifted up it was a sign for the children of Israel to set forward on their journey, and when the cloud rested again on the tent it was a sign for them to encamp. "At the commandment of Jehovah they encamped, and at the commandment of

Jehovah they journeyed; they kept the charge of Jehovah at the commandment of Jehovah by Moses.”

The Journey from Mount Sinai.

Now read Numbers 10: 33-36. Verse 35 shows us how the Israelites believed Jehovah went with the ark to give them victory in the battles with their enemies; the last part is probably an old battle song. Verse 36 may be an old night song of the camp. What does it also tell of the belief about the ark? We know that Jehovah did not give the Hebrews victory just because they carried the ark into battle. Can you think how the presence of the ark would inspire them to greater valor in battle? So with the ark at the head of the caravan as a symbol that Jehovah was leading them, the Hebrew tribes journeyed from Mount Sinai till they came to Kadesh, in the Wilderness of Zin.

XXII. The Promised Land.

Locate Kadesh on the map, a little south of Canaan. It is on the edge of the desert, but the lands to the north and east are green and fertile. Very soon after leaving Egypt, in about two years the account says, the Hebrews reached this South Country, as it is called, and made Kadesh their headquarters. These shepherd tribes must have looked with longing eyes toward the fields and valleys north of them, only a hundred miles away. This land, too, their traditions said, was the home of their ancestors, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, which Jehovah had given to them. How many years have you learned it was that the children of Israel wandered in the desert? Then, instead of entering Canaan by the shortest way, directly north from Kadesh, they entered from the east near Moab. Find Moab on the map, east of the Dead Sea. What mountain range separates it from Kadesh and the South Country?

In later years, the Hebrew story-tellers wondered why their ancestors had not entered this fertile country at once instead of wandering in the desert so many years, and they concluded it must be because Jehovah was angry with them for some sin and this was the punishment. Let us read the story they tell, and at the same time try to see what the real reason was.

Sending Out the Spies.

The ancestors of the Hebrews had left Canaan so many years before that the returning tribes knew very little of the country, so Moses sent out spies who should bring back a report about the land and its inhabitants. Find in Numbers 13: 1-3 whom Moses selected to go as spies. Verses 17-20 tell what Moses wished them to observe. Why was it necessary to know whether the people lived in camps or in walled cities? Why should he wish to know if the land was "fat or lean"? What does this mean?

This story, like others we have noticed, is retold from two earlier books. Part is taken from the J E collection, and a

part from the P history book. This explains the few disagreements we shall notice. Remember that the J E story is the older and usually the more probable. P always tells the more wonderful story. How far into Canaan does P say the spies went? Verse 21. Find this place on the map, and notice how much of the land they had to cross. How far does the other story say they went? Verse 22. Find Hebron on the map. Read the account of the grapes and fruit brought back from Eshcol: verse 23.

The Report of the Spies.

How long does verse 25 say the spies were gone? The report which they brought back is in verses 26-29. The other writer gives quite a different report: verses 32, 33. How did they describe the size of the strong men of the land? Why did they bring an evil report of the land? What did Caleb and the other spies say when they made the report? Verses 30, 31.

Then the people were so afraid that they proposed electing a captain and returning to slavery in Egypt. Joshua and Caleb tried to tell them that Jehovah would help them to conquer the land, but they threatened to kill these brave men with stones. Read Numbers 14: 1-10. Then, the story says, Jehovah was very angry because the people did not trust Him, and He threatened to send a pestilence to destroy them all. But Moses pleaded with Jehovah as he had done at Mount Sinai. What argument did Moses use? Verses 13-16 and 19. So Jehovah, we are told, did not send the pestilence, but He said that not one of these cowardly Israelites should enter the promised land. They should die in the desert; but their children should know the land they had rejected. Read verses 20-31. And Jehovah said they should wander in the desert forty years,—a year for every day in which they had spied out the land. Compare Numbers 13: 25 and 14: 34, 35. How were the spies who brought the evil report punished? Verses 36-38. Why were Caleb and Joshua saved?

The Rash Attempt.

When Moses told the people what Jehovah had declared, they said, "We will go up to this place, for we have sinned."

The account of this attempt you will find in verses 39-45. What does the writer think was the reason for this defeat? This is the explanation the Hebrews gave for the many years in the barren desert region. What sin did they say their fathers were guilty of? What do you think was the true reason why they did not enter Canaan from the south? What verses in the lesson indicate that this was so? What then was the real cause for so many years being spent in the desert? How did it show wisdom on the part of Moses? From the previous lessons what have you learned about these years of wandering?

The Journey around Mount Seir.

Find on the map, just south of the Dead Sea, the land of Edom. When the Israelites found they could not conquer the strong tribes north of Kadesh, Moses asked permission of the king of Edom to cross his country in order to reach the fertile lands to the east. But the king of Edom was suspicious of the Israelites and refused, and came out against them with "many people." So Moses wisely decided not to fight against him, but to lead the people the long journey around the southern end of Mount Seir. Trace this route on the map. It was a slow journey, for they must let their cattle feed as they went along, and a hard journey, too, for the region is rocky and barren. On the way Aaron died, and was buried on Mount Hor. The Arabs to this day point out with reverence the grave of Aaron and call the mountain by his name. Miriam had died before they left Kadesh.

You have already read of Moses' stern rule during these years. Another story is told of the way in which Jehovah punished those who rebelled against Moses. The people became weary with the long journey around Mount Seir and murmured against Moses. Read how Jehovah sent fiery serpents among them to punish them: Numbers 21: 4-9. But at last the journey was over; the Israelites had passed up the eastern side of Mount Seir and finally encamped in the plains east of Moab.

XXIII. Balaam's Prophecy.

Find on the map the river Arnon, flowing into the east side of the Dead Sea. The land south of this river was occupied by the Moabites. When the Israelites reached this region the land north of the Arnon was occupied by the Amorites. The Amorites came out against the children of Israel to prevent them from crossing their country. But during their "forty" years in the wilderness, the Hebrew tribes had become courageous and strong, and they conquered the Amorites and gained all the region from the river Arnon north to the river Jabbok.

The Frightened King.

When the king of Moab saw what the Israelites had done to the Amorites he was very much afraid of them. What did he say about them? Numbers 22: 4. You have already learned that in these early times men believed the blessing or curse of a prophet or wise man would come true. So Balak, king of Moab, sent for a seer, or wise man, whom he knew about to come and curse these people. Read in Numbers 22: 5, 6 the message Balak sent to Balaam. So the messengers of Moab and Midian went to Balaam with presents and rewards to ask if he would come and curse this people. Verses 7-14 tell how Balaam received the messengers.

But Balak was not satisfied. He thought he had not offered Balaam rewards enough, so he sent again offering greater rewards, and this time Balaam went back with the princes: verses 18-21. Although God was angry because Balaam wished to go, yet He let him go, on what condition? Now read the story of how God sent an angel to stop Balaam on his way, and of how the ass which Balaam rode opened his mouth and talked to him: verses 22-35. Then Balak went out to meet the prophet and asked him why he had not come the first time. What did Balaam answer? Verses 37, 38. Then Balak offered a great sacrifice, hoping to please God

by it so that He would let Balaam pronounce a curse on these Israelites.

Balaam blesses Israel.

The next morning Balak took Balaam up to a high hill from which they could see the camps of the Hebrews, and they offered sacrifices, and Jehovah told Balaam what to say. Read from Numbers 22: 41 to 23: 6. Notice what Balaam said in 23: 8. When Balaam had finished speaking what did Balak say and do? Verses 11-17. And this time, too, Balaam blessed the Israelites. Read verses 19-21. What in verse 24 did he say of the strength of these people?

Then Balak took Balaam to still another mountain, with the hope that this time Jehovah would send a curse. Again they offered seven sacrifices on seven altars. And when Balaam looked out upon the camp of Israel, God told him what to say. Read chapter 24, verses 5, 8, 9. Then Balak was very angry with Balaam. What did he say to him? Verses 10-14. So Balaam told Balak what these people should do in the future. What does he say in verse 17 they should do to Moab? And in the following verses he tells how they will destroy the other nations, the Edomites, the Amalekites and the Kenites. Do you think Balaam could have known what Israel would do in later years? What does it tell you about the time the story was written? Where does verse 25 say Balaam went when he finished speaking? We are also given another end to this story of Balaam: Numbers 31: 7, 8 says that when the Midianites made war against Israel, Balaam helped Midian, and the Israelites killed him in the battle.

The Death of Moses.

By this time Moses was a very old man. He had led the children of Israel to the borders of Canaan, but he did not live to enter it with them. The Hebrews who wrote these stories felt that it was very hard that Moses should not be allowed to enter the land to which he had been leading his people so faithfully, and they thought he must have angered God by some sin. So they said it was because he once became

impatient with his people in the wilderness. You will find the story in Numbers 20: 2-12.

But when the time came for Moses to die, Jehovah told him to appoint Joshua to take his place as leader of the people, and then Jehovah led Moses to the top of Mount Pisgah, in the land of Moab, and showed him the land west of the Jordan, which had been promised to the children of Israel. And there on the mountain Moses died. You will find the story of his death in Deuteronomy 34. So ended the life of one of the noblest and greatest men who ever lived. He had led a nation of slaves away from their oppressors and made of them a strong, courageous people. He took them from a land of idolatry and taught them to worship a holy and righteous God; and that religion which he taught those Hebrew tribes in the desert was the beginning of the higher, nobler thought of God which we hold to-day.

XXIV. Joshua enters Canaan.

Who became leader of the Israelites after Moses died? What have you already read about his bravery? By the time Joshua became their head, the children of Israel had grown to be, under Moses' rule, a strong, brave people, able to conquer many of the Canaanite tribes. You read in the last lesson how afraid the neighboring tribes were of them. The book that tells what the Israelites did while Joshua was their captain is called by his name. In it we shall find many strange stories told of ways in which Jehovah helped Joshua win his victories. We must remember that in those days people believed that all kinds of remarkable things could happen, and they liked to tell wonderful stories of their heroes. By the time the book was written, hundreds of years after Joshua lived, these stories had grown just as the stories of Moses grew.

Sending Spies into Jericho.

At the time Joshua became their leader, the Israelites were in the land just east of the Jordan, opposite Jericho. Find Jericho on the map. This was a strong walled city in the midst of a fertile region, and if it could be captured the place would make a headquarters from which attacks might be made on the rest of the country.

The first thing Joshua did was to send two spies into the city to learn its strength. The two men entered the city secretly and went to the house of a woman named Rahab, whose house was built on the city wall. But some one had seen them enter and told the king of Jericho that two Israelites had come to spy out the land. Then the king sent officers to Rahab, demanding that she give up the men. Read what Rahab did to save them in Joshua 2: 1-7. As soon as the officers were gone, Rahab brought the men from their hiding-place. What did she say was the reason she saved them? Verse 9. What favor did she ask of them? Verses 12, 13. What did the men answer? Verse 14. When the officers left the city to find them, they had locked the city gates behind

them so no one could go out. But Rahab planned a clever way for the spies to escape, and they told her how to mark her house so that all in it should be saved in the coming battle. Read the account in verses 15-24.

Crossing the Jordan.

The next morning after the spies returned Joshua gathered together the people on the banks of the river to cross over. Read the account of the crossing in Joshua 3: 7, 8, 13-17. And after all the people had passed over and the ark yet stood in the middle of the river, what did Jehovah command Joshua to do? Joshua 4: 1-3. Now read verse 8. After this Joshua commanded the priests to bring the ark up out of the river. What happened then? Verse 18. Why did Joshua have these stones brought from the middle of the Jordan and piled on the bank? Verses 19-24. Like the story of Moses crossing the Red Sea, this could not have happened just as it is told here, but like that story it may be based on something which could and did occur. Verse 16 suggests the true story. Far up the river a landslide made a dam across it, stopping the flow of water. The water below the dam continued to flow into the Dead Sea, leaving the bed empty. Finally enough water gathered behind the dam to force it away, but in the meantime Joshua had taken advantage of the empty river to cross. The later Hebrews believed Jehovah had performed a miracle to help them.

The Israelites crossed the river just before the celebration of the Passover. And after the Passover they ate the food that grew in the land. Joshua 5:12 tells us that after that Jehovah ceased to send the manna, for they did not need it any more.

The Capture of Jericho.

Read Joshua 6: 1. Then, we are told, Jehovah told Joshua how to take the city. For six days, once each day, all the men of war, with the ark carried in the midst by the priests, were to march around the city. The priests were to blow the trumpets, but no one was to speak a word during the march. On the seventh day they were to march around the city seven times. Read the account in Joshua 6: 8-14 and 20.

Just what really happened we cannot tell. It may be that the inhabitants of the city thought the Israelites were conducting a religious procession and paid little attention after the first day. Then when they were off their guard, at a signal from Joshua, Rahab's family opened the gates and the Israelites rushed in as easily as if the walls had fallen flat. Now read verse 21. And then they burned the city, but the silver and gold and vessels of brass and iron they saved for a gift to Jehovah. And Rahab and her family they saved as the spies had promised. What do you think of Rahab's act in betraying her city? What of her reason for doing it?

The Trick of the Gibeonites.

After this Joshua conquered the city of Ai, killed its inhabitants and set it on fire: Joshua 8: 27-29. Now find on the map, west of Jericho, the city of Gibeon. When the inhabitants of this city saw what Joshua had done to Jericho and to Ai they were much afraid and they planned to deceive Joshua, so he would not destroy them. Joshua 9: 3-15 tells what they did. After three days the Israelites learned who the strangers really were, but they had made a treaty with them not to kill them, and they had to keep it. Read what Joshua did with these Gibeonites: verses 22-27.

Joshua's Policy.

After this Joshua captured other cities and the tribes of Israel spread over all the land. A remarkable story is told of one of these battles in Joshua 10: 6-14. Whenever the Israelites conquered a city they killed all the inhabitants, men, women and children, and burned the city. The accounts we have in the book of Judges say Jehovah commanded all these cruelties, but we know this was not so. The truer explanation is in the idea of God which these Hebrews had. They thought of Jehovah, their god, as a war god, and one way to honor him was to destroy all those people who worshiped any god but him. In later days their own prophets condemned this custom, for they had come to see that it was wrong and taught the Hebrews better.

XXV. The Time of the Judges.

Under Joshua the Hebrew tribes had spread over the central part of Canaan, but they had not entirely conquered the previous inhabitants of the land. The Philistines and Canaanites held the region along the coast and still had many strong walled cities in the Hebrew territory. Many of the Hebrews adhered to the shepherd life and probably lived in the tents outside the cities. On the south were still the fierce Amalekites, and on the east the Ammonites and Moabites. Locate these tribes on the map.

These heathen tribes often made attacks on the Hebrews and frequently overpowered them and made slaves of them. If the tribes had been a united people they could have driven off the enemy, but after the death of Joshua there was no strong leader to hold them together. The tribes were jealous of one another and sometimes fought each other. Besides, they married Canaanite women and adopted many of the religious customs of the Canaanites. They also worshiped Baal, the Canaanite god, and built altars to him. The story of these troublous times, when for two hundred years "every man did that which was right in his own eyes" and "what was evil in the sight of Jehovah," is told in the book of Judges.

The "Judges" were heroes who in times of need aroused the people of their tribe and drove away their oppressors. The book that tells about it was not written until long after this time, and its writer says that all this trouble was sent by Jehovah because the Israelites had forsaken him and worshiped Baal. But when they were sorry for their sin and cried unto Jehovah he sent a hero to deliver them. Many of these heroes are named in the book of Judges, but stories are told of only a few.

Ehud, the Left-handed Man.

At one time, the Moabites, the Ammonites and the Amalekites united against Israel and took possession of the country about Jericho, the "city of palm-trees." And for eighteen

years oppressed the tribes which had settled around Jericho, and made them pay tribute to the king of Moab. At last Ehud, of the tribe of Benjamin, determined to deliver them. When he took the tribute to Eglon, king of Moab, he hid under his mantle a two-edged sword. The story of how he contrived to get Eglon by himself without a guard, and how he killed him, you will find in Judges 3: 12-25. Then Ehud called to his help the neighboring tribe of Ephraim, and they killed all the Moabites before they could escape. Read the account in verses 26-30.

Shamgar.

The story of the hero Shamgar is told in one verse: Judges 3: 31. This does not mean that Shamgar himself killed six hundred men, but that he gathered together a band of farmers who had only ox-goads for their weapons, and drove back and slaughtered the attacking Philistines.

Deborah and Jael.

The next deliverer was a woman, a prophetess. In those days there were certain holy men and women who were believed to know Jehovah's wishes better than any one else. They were called prophets, and those who wished advice about important matters consulted them. People believed that Jehovah told the prophets what to say and do.

Judges 4: 1-3 tells the condition of the Israelites in the time of Deborah. Find Hazor on the map, in the northern part of the country. Deborah lived farther south, near Mount Ephraim, and tales were often brought to her of the cruelty of Jabin, king of the Canaanites. She realized that unless something was done very soon, the Israelites would become hopeless slaves of the Canaanites. So Deborah sent for Barak, who lived in Kedesh-Naphtali and was known to be a man of valor. She told him to gather an army from the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun, and she promised to bring up to help them men from the tribes of Ephraim, Benjamin and Issachar. So they all gathered at Deborah's command to fight for Jehovah on Mount Tabor, an army of ten thousand. Where is Mount Tabor on the map?

Then Sisera, captain of the Canaanite army, did just what Deborah expected and had planned. Read the story of the battle in Judges 4: 12-16. So Barak, with his half-armed men who had only wooden clubs and arrows and slings, routed Sisera with his chariots and horses and lances and shields.

Now, in the valley of Jezreel, south of Mount Tabor, lived the clan of Heber, the Kenite, which had come up with the Israelites from the desert. But because the Canaanites were so powerful the Kenites had been frightened into making a treaty with them. So Sisera fled to the tent of Heber, where he thought he would be protected. But was he safe there? Jael, the wife of Heber, worshiped Israel's god Jehovah, and the enemy of Jehovah was in her power. Read the story of Jael and Sisera in verses 17-24.

Then the victorious Israelites sang a song of praise to Jehovah. And in it they told how cruelly the Israelites had been oppressed and how the tribes had gathered together and driven off the oppressor, and they praised Jael, saying, "Blessed above women shall Jael be." Notice the closing words of this song: Judges 5: 31.

Jephthah's Rash Vow.

Find on the map the land of Tob, in the northern part of the region called Gilead. There lived in this land a brave man named Jephthah, who had been driven from his home in the city of Gilead by his half-brothers because he was not the son of their mother. But in the land of Tob men had gathered about him, and they lived by making raids on other tribes and on passing caravans, as Robin Hood lived in England.

The land of Gilead was rich and fertile, and the Ammonites who lived on the edge of the desert were constantly warring with the Israelites for the possession of it. You will remember that years before, while Moses was alive, the Hebrews had taken it from the Amorites.

At the time of our story, the Israelites had been brought very low by their enemy. So the chief men of Gilead gathered at Mizpah to decide what had better be done. Locate Mizpah. Now these men had heard of Jephthah's boldness and bravery,

and although they had driven him out, they decided to send for him, and to offer to make him their chief if he would come and help them. Judges 11: 4-11 tells how at first he was inclined to refuse, but finally consented.

You have already learned that it was the custom among these early peoples to promise a sacrifice to their god in return for some great favor they wished. And the most precious and most acceptable sacrifice was the life of a human being. So before going to battle against the Ammonites, Jephthah made a vow or promise to Jehovah: Judges 11: 30-33. But when Jephthah returned rejoicing in victory, his joy was changed to the deepest sorrow. Who was the first to meet him? Verses 34, 35. See how brave verse 36 says his daughter was. Read the rest of the story in verses 37-40. We are horrified at the story of Jephthah's act; but we must honor him for being true to a sacred vow to Jehovah at whatever cost to himself, although we should condemn the belief that made such a deed possible.

The Shibboleth.

In these days of the Judges there was often much jealousy between the tribes. The tribe of Ephraim west of the Jordan was envious of Jephthah's great victory and they quarreled with him because he had not asked them to help. What did Jephthah say to them? Judges 12: 1-3. But the men of Ephraim were determined to fight, and they told the men of Gilead that they were runaways from Ephraim and Manasseh. This was considered a great insult and Jephthah showed them no mercy in the battle that followed. Even those who tried to escape by pretending they were not Ephraimites were discovered and killed. Verses 4-6 tell how they were found out. We find that these heroes of the book of Judges were often cruel and treacherous and revengeful, but it was their loyalty to Jehovah that kept the Hebrew religion from being destroyed. If it had not been for them the knowledge of one holy God might never have come to us. God never lets the truth be wholly lost.

XXVI. Gideon's Victory.

One of the most famous victories told in the book of Judges is the victory of Gideon over the Midianites. These Midianites now occupied the great eastern plains between the Jordan and Euphrates Rivers, and were "half-traders, half-marauders," like the Bedouins of to-day. It was a tribe of Midianites, you remember, that took Joseph into Egypt.

For seven years, we are told, bands of these people crossed the Jordan and laid waste the land of the Israelites. So fierce were they that in some places the Israelites had to hide themselves in the caves of the mountains and build strongholds among the rocks. If they did get an opportunity to plant their fields, when the harvest time came the Midianites would again sweep over the country, plundering and destroying all that had grown. They came in such numbers, like "locusts for multitude," and had so many camels and horses that the Israelites were powerless against them. Judges 6: 1-6 tells of this terrible condition of the Hebrews. In one of their raids the Midianites killed the brothers of Gideon. In ancient times, when there were no courts and trials, and often unfriendly relations between tribes, it was thought to be a man's solemn right and duty to kill the murderers of any of his family. This was called the law of blood revenge. For seven years the Israelites had endured the Midianite oppression, not daring to resist, but the murder of Gideon's brothers roused him to revenge their death and to save his people from further outrages.

Gideon and the Angel.

We have already noticed how the writers of the Bible narratives thought God took strange and wonderful ways of telling their early heroes what their duty was. They tell such a story of Gideon, who belonged to the clan or family of Abiezar, of the tribe of Manasseh.

Now read Judges 6: 11. It was the custom then to thresh

the wheat on high places where the wind could blow away the chaff. Why was Gideon doing this work in the hollow or cave where the grapes were pressed? As he worked here, brooding over the condition of his people, he may have concluded that their misfortunes came because the Israelites had not been true to Jehovah. What he did later seems to show this. The story says an angel appeared before him and told him to save Israel. Read the conversation between Gideon and the angel: verses 12-18. What does verse 15 tell about Gideon's character? Who else, years before, had said a similar thing when Jehovah called him to deliver Israel? Then, we are told, Gideon prepared a feast for his guest, and the angel gave Gideon a sign to show he was really a messenger from Jehovah. What was this sign? Verses 19-24.

The Altar of Baal.

Gideon's father, like many other Israelites, worshiped not only Jehovah, but also the Canaanite god, Baal. This is shown by Gideon's other name, Jerubbaal, a word which has the name of the god as a part of it. But Gideon now decided to stand for Jehovah only, and the first thing he did to show his loyalty was to break down the altar of Baal. Beside the altars to Baal was always erected an Asherah, or tree stripped of its branches, which was considered sacred. Read the story in verses 25-27 and notice what Gideon did with this Asherah. Now see in verses 28-31 what happened when Gideon's act was discovered. What do you think of the argument of Joash, that if Baal was a god he could himself punish Gideon for this insult?

The Sign of the Fleece.

After this stand for Jehovah, Gideon prepared to make an attack on the Midianites and their allies, the Amalekites, who had again entered the land and were encamped in the valley of Jezreel, about twenty-five miles north of Ophrah. And all the men of his clan, Abiezar, and of his tribe, Manasseh, gathered at his call, and also the tribes of Asher and Zebulun and Naphtali, till he had an army of thirty-two thousand men.

Then Gideon feared that perhaps he was mistaken, after all; perhaps he had only imagined Jehovah had chosen him for this work. So before going into battle he asked for another sign that would prove Jehovah was with him. Verses 36-40 tell what sign Gideon asked for and how Jehovah answered him.

The Chosen Three Hundred.

Now our story-writer tells us a very strange thing. He says in Judges 7: 2 that Jehovah did not wish Gideon to win the victory with such a large army, because the Israelites would not then say Jehovah had given them the victory, but would think they had won it by their own strength. This thought that God was capable of jealousy like men was one of the many strange and wrong ideas of Him these early people had. Read in Judges 7: 3 how Gideon first reduced his numbers. Why would it be wiser to have a smaller army with no one afraid?

Still there were too many, and this time Gideon was told to get rid of all who did not fulfil another test. It was not only necessary to have men who were brave, but also men who were cautious and watchful. You will find this test in verses 4-8. So the three hundred who snatched some water in their hands while standing and looking about them were chosen.

The Panic among the Midianites.

Read in verses 9-14 how Gideon and his servant went as spies to the camp of the Midianites. When he heard this conversation Gideon knew that the Midianites were already afraid and this was the time to gain an easy victory. So he at once prepared for an attack at midnight. His plan was so to startle and frighten the sleeping army that in the darkness and the excitement they could not tell friend from foe. Each of Gideon's men carried a trumpet, and a torch whose light was hidden in an earthen pitcher. Read how the plan worked: verses 15-22. Less than two hundred years ago this same strategy was used in an Arab battle.

Gideon's Pursuit.

So the enemy fled in great fear, as Gideon expected, some crossing the Jordan near Jezreel and others flying southwards to cross it at other places. Then Gideon sent word to the tribe of Ephraim to guard all the crossing places in the south and to let no Midianite escape, while he and his men pursued on the east side of the river. And the men of Ephraim captured two princes of the Midianites, Oreb and Zeeb, and took their heads to Gideon across the Jordan.

But the Ephraimites were angry because Gideon had not called on them when he made his first attack. What did they say to him? Judges 8: 1. If Gideon had answered angrily there might have been a serious quarrel among the Israelites. See what Gideon did answer in verses 2, 3.

Then Gideon and his men, "faint, yet pursuing," continued the chase. When Gideon reached Succoth he asked for food for his company, for they had not eaten for many hours. But the men of Succoth, although Israelites themselves, refused. Find Succoth and Penuel on the map. These cities were located where there was constant danger of attack by the desert tribes. Perhaps they paid a tribute to the Midianites to protect themselves and did not dare to show any friendship to Gideon. What Gideon threatened to do on his return is told in Judges 8: 4-9.

Then Gideon overtook and surprised the Midianites south of Penuel, and gained another victory, in which he captured their two kings, Zebah and Zalmunna. Now read in Judges 8: 15-21 how Gideon kept his threats to Penuel and Succoth, and how he revenged the death of his brothers according to the ancient custom.

Thus Gideon served his family and Israel at the same time. From the story of his deeds we get a vivid idea of the men of this time. What do you like and what do you dislike in his character? The victory of Gideon was so complete that the Midianites never again threatened the Hebrew territory. It became a famous victory and is referred to in the book of Psalms (Ps. 83: 11) and in the writings of Isaiah (Isa. 9: 4 and 10: 26).

Abimelech, the "Bramble King."

Gideon's boldness and courage and his stern treatment of his enemies made the people of his tribe want him to be their king. He refused, saying, "Jehovah shall rule over you"; but he did consent to rule as a kind of judge until he died. Gideon had married many wives, and had seventy sons, and one of these sons, Abimelech, whose mother was a woman of Shechem, wished to be king of his father's tribe. So he went to Shechem, and said to his mother's people, "Which is better for you, that all the sons of Jerubbaal rule over you, or that one rule over you? Remember, I am your bone and your flesh." And the men of Shechem helped Abimelech to kill his brothers, and they made Abimelech king. But one brother, Jotham, had managed to hide and escape. And when he heard that Abimelech had been made king, he went to the place where the men of Shechem were and spoke to them a parable which has become very famous. Read it in Judges 9: 7-15. Whom did Jotham mean the bramble to represent? What did he think of Abimelech's fitness to be king? Then Jotham fled for fear of Abimelech.

Jotham was right. Abimelech was so tyrannical and cruel that at last the men of Shechem and of the neighboring cities revolted. And when Abimelech attacked the tower of one city in which the people had gathered for safety, a woman threw a millstone down upon him and killed him. The writer of the book of Judges says, "Thus God requited the wickedness of Abimelech, which he did unto his father, in slaying his seventy brethren."

XXVII. Samson and the Philistines.

The Hebrews, like all early peoples, had great admiration for physical strength. Just as the Greeks told stories of Hercules and his marvelous feats, so the Hebrews told stories of Samson and his great strength and daring. Some of the deeds related of him you will know cannot be true. You have already learned how these stories grew to the form in which we now read them.

Now find on the map the land of the Philistines, on the west coast of Canaan. The Philistines had come across the Mediterranean Sea from Greece or Asia Minor and settled here about the time the Israelites had crossed the Jordan. They worshiped a god named Dagon, which they thought was half man and half fish. At the time Samson lived they had made the neighboring tribes of Dan and Judah much afraid of them.

The Birth of Samson.

The Hebrews not only liked to tell remarkable tales of what their heroes did, but they were also fond of relating wonderful stories of their birth. So they said that before Samson was born an angel came to his mother and told her that she would have a son, and that she must bring him up as a Nazarite. A Nazarite was dedicated to Jehovah for all his life. He could not drink wine or any strong drink, or eat certain kinds of food, and his hair must never be cut. It was Samson's long hair that gave him his strength. When this son was born his mother called him Samson, which meant "sun-god," or "the splendid sun," and she brought him up as a Nazarite, as the angel commanded.

The Lion and the Riddle.

When Samson grew up he loved a Philistine woman, and he wished his father to arrange for his marriage to her. What did his father answer? Judges 14: 3. Circumcision was a religious ceremony of the Jews by which they dedicated their

babies to Jehovah, just as in the Catholic Church all babies are baptized as soon as they are born. The Jews always spoke scornfully of those people who did not have this ceremony, much as early Christians used to speak of the "unbaptized heathen." But Samson insisted on marrying this woman; so his parents finally went with him to arrange the marriage. Read how Samson killed a young lion on the way to Timnah: verses 5, 6. He considered this deed such a simple thing, he did not think it worth mentioning to his parents. In the dry, hot climate of Palestine the carcass dried quickly. When he returned some time later for the marriage, what had happened to the body of the lion? Verses 8, 9.

People in ancient times were very fond of riddles and always used them as a part of the entertainment at feasts. So at the wedding feast Samson gave a riddle about the lion he had killed. You will see what it was in verses 10-14. But the Philistines could not guess the riddle and they begged Samson's wife to find it out and tell it to them. How did she persuade Samson to tell her? Verses 15-18. Then Samson was very angry. Read how he paid his wager: verse 19. The writer of this story thought Samson's great strength came from Jehovah. This is what is referred to when he says: "The Spirit of Jehovah came mightily upon him."

Samson's Revenge.

Samson had left his wife in anger, but after a while he returned to her with a present. What did he find had happened? Judges 15: 1, 2. Verses 4, 5 tell what Samson did to revenge himself on the Philistines. This was not only a great injury to the Philistines, but also an insult. See what they did when they found out who had done it: verses 6-8.

At this time the Philistines had become masters of the Israelite tribes near them, and the Israelites were in great fear of them. So to save themselves the men of Judah found Samson and gave him up to the Philistines: verses 9-13. What did Samson do then? Verses 14-16. After this deed Samson was "sore athirst" and called on Jehovah and said, "Thou hast given this great deliverance by the hand of thy servant, and now

shall I die of thirst?" Then God caused a spring to gush out of the hollow place in the jaw-bone, and Samson drank. Now in the Hebrew language the word "Lehi," which is also the name of a place, means "jaw-bone." The foundation of the story probably is that Samson performed some mighty deed of valor at the "jaw-bone," that is, the place "Lehi," and in a hollow at Lehi he found the spring.

Samson Betrayed to the Philistines.

After this, Samson went secretly one night to the Philistine city of Gaza. The men of the city heard of it and stationed themselves outside the city wall to seize Samson when he departed in the morning. But Samson left at midnight "and laid hold of the doors of the gate of the city and the two posts, and plucked them up, bar and all, and put them upon his shoulders, and carried them up to the top of the mountain that is before Hebron."

But at last Samson was captured. In the valley of Sorek lived a Philistine woman named Delilah, who had great influence with Samson. She pretended to be Samson's friend, but she was really helping the Philistines to take him. While he was so strong the Philistines were powerless, so Delilah tried to find out the secret of his strength. Three times he told her what was not true, and three times Delilah tested what he had said and found it was not so. In Judges 16: 4-14 read what Samson told Delilah, and what she tried to do.

By this time Samson should have learned not to trust her. But she persisted in asking him day after day, telling him that if he loved her as he said he did, he would tell her the truth. So Samson finally did tell her that if his long hair were cut off, his strength would go from him, and he would become weak and "be like any other man." Then Delilah knew he had spoken the truth. What did she do? Verses 18-21. So the Philistines captured Samson, and the work they made him do was a great insult, because it was the work usually done by women slaves.

Samson's Great Revenge and Death.

But the Philistines forgot that Samson's hair would grow again and bring back his strength. One day when they were about to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon, their god, in the temple of Dagon, they called for Samson, that they might ridicule him and make sport of him. You will find the account of what happened in verses 23-31.

So ended an unhappy and ill-spent life. We have condemned what other heroes in the book of Judges did, but Samson must be condemned even more. Ehud, Deborah, Jael, Jephtha, Gideon,—all were prompted by a sense of their duty to Israel and to Jehovah. Samson's deeds, however, were not done for his nation or his God, but just for his own personal revenge this spirit of revenge at last causing his own death. It was because the Hebrews admired his great strength and because they hated the Philistines that the stories of Samson were so popular.

XXVIII. The Story of Ruth.

The stories in the book of Judges have been tales of war and bloodshed. In Ruth we have a story of the happier side of Hebrew life. The book of Ruth follows the book of Judges. It was written many years after this time and is one of the most beautiful stories in the whole Bible.

In the days of the Judges there came a famine in the land of Judah, and a certain man of Bethlehem, named Elimelech, with his wife, Naomi, and his two sons, went to the country of Moab. The two sons married two Moabite women; the wife of one son was named Orpah, and the wife of the other was Ruth. When ten years had passed, Elimelech and his sons had died, and Naomi, Orpah and Ruth were left alone.

Naomi returns to Bethlehem.

Then Naomi heard that the famine was over and she felt anxious to return to her own country. So she set out from the land of Moab for Bethlehem and her two daughters-in-law started with her. But as they journeyed, Naomi realized that though she was going back to friends, Orpah and Ruth were going to a strange land and a strange people. Besides this, it was believed in those days that different gods ruled over different countries and peoples, and if Orpah and Ruth returned with her they would also have to worship a strange god. So Naomi told them to return to their own people and said, "Jehovah deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead and with me," and she prayed that each might be married again to a good husband. But the daughters loved their mother-in-law and at first they were unwilling to leave her. But Naomi felt it would be wiser for them to remain in their own land, for she was poor and could do little for them. So Orpah turned back, but Ruth refused to leave her. The words in which Ruth made her choice are very beautiful and very famous: Ruth 1: 15-18.

Then Ruth and Naomi went on till they came to Bethlehem.

Read of the meeting between Naomi and her friends in verses 19-22. "Naomi" means "pleasant," but "Mara" means "bitterness." What, then, does verse 20 mean?

The Field of Boaz.

Naomi's husband had a relative named Boaz, who was a rich man and owned large fields. It was a law in early Israel that those who worked in the fields gathering the harvest should not be too thorough in their work; the poor should be allowed to follow after the harvesters and pick up the gleanings. So Ruth went out to glean in the fields, and the field she happened to go to was the field of Boaz. When Boaz came to observe how the work was going on he saw Ruth, and he made inquiries about who this stranger was. The story of all his kindness to Ruth that day is told in Ruth 2: 1-17.

So Ruth went home to Naomi with nearly a bushel of barley, —an unusual amount for a gleaner— and told Naomi all that had happened. Read what Naomi said to her: verses 18-23.

Naomi's Plan.

There was a curious custom in early Israel that when a man died and left no children, it was the duty of his brother or nearest relative to marry the widow and care for her. The reason for this was to prevent the lands or other property which the dead man left from going out of his family, for the first son of this second marriage became the dead man's heir and took his name. So when Naomi saw that Boaz was kind to Ruth, she told Ruth to stay in his field till the end of the harvest; then Boaz would see how gentle and diligent she was. And when the harvest was over, she made a plan to remind Boaz that it might be his duty to marry Ruth. This would give Boaz also the right to redeem for Naomi's family, or claim from whoever had it, the land which had once been Elimelech's and which had been lost. Read in Ruth 3: 1-5 what Naomi told Ruth to do. So she did what her mother-in-law had said, and when Boaz awoke in the night he found her lying at his feet. He knew what she meant and he promised to do whatever was right. What did he say to her? Verses 10-13.

Early in the morning Ruth arose and returned to Naomi, and Boaz gave her six measures of barley to take back with her. In Ruth 3: 16-18 you may read of her return and her report to her mother-in-law.

The Marriage Arranged.

That morning Boaz went to the city gate and sat there waiting till others should arrive. It was here that men were in the habit of meeting and transacting business. When he saw the kinsman nearer than himself he called to him, and he also called ten other men as witnesses. What did he say to the near kinsman? Ruth 4: 1-4. What did Boaz tell him he must do also if he redeemed the land? Verse 5. What does verse 6 say about his willingness to do this?

Now read of the curious way in which they sealed the agreement: verses 7-10. Then all the people blessed Boaz and Ruth and they told Naomi that her daughter-in-law, who loved her and who had been so faithful, was better to her than seven sons. And when Ruth and Boaz had a son he was brought to Naomi, for he would be Elimelech's heir, and the women said of him, "May his name be famous in Israel." And they named the baby Obed; and when he grew up and married he had a son named Jesse, and Jesse's son was the famous and greatly beloved king, David.

XXIX. Samuel and Eli.

Samuel was the last of the Judges and the first of a long line of prophets or teachers. It was the prophets who understood God's will better than other men and taught it to the people. In this lesson we shall see how the Hebrews believed Samuel was called by God when he was still a child. Like the stories of Moses, the story of Samuel shows how gratefully the later Hebrews remembered him.

The Sanctuary at Shiloh.

Find Shiloh on the map, in the central part of Canaan, in the land of the tribe of Ephraim. When the Hebrews had secured control of central Canaan they built a house here at Shiloh, in which they placed the sacred ark, and the people used to go there to worship and offer sacrifices. At the time of our story, the priest who cared for the ark and conducted the service was Eli. He was helped by his two sons, Hophni and Phinehas.

In the hills of Ephraim lived a man named Elkanah, who went faithfully every year with his two wives and his children to offer his sacrifice and to vow loyalty to Jehovah. One of these wives had several children; the other, Hannah, had none. She was very sorrowful about it, and one year when she came to the sacrifice, she prayed that if Jehovah would send her a baby boy she would bring him up as a Nazarite, and he should be given to Jehovah all the days of his life.

Eli saw her praying and said to her, "The God of Israel grant thy petition that thou hast asked of Him." And because Eli was a priest of Jehovah, Hannah went away comforted with the belief that God would answer her prayer.

Samuel given to Jehovah.

The next year when Elkanah went up to Shiloh, Hannah did not go, for she had a baby boy to care for. And Hannah

said that she would not go again until Samuel was old enough to be left there, to serve Jehovah as she had vowed. But when Samuel was three or four years old his mother took him up to Shiloh with a sacrifice which she offered in gratitude to Jehovah. Read the story in 1 Samuel 1: 21, 22, 24-28.

Then Hannah sang a song of joy and praise to Jehovah, and returned to her own home, leaving Samuel to live in "the house of God" with Eli. And after this, every year when his mother came up to Shiloh to offer the yearly sacrifice, she brought him a little ephod, or linen robe, which she had made for him, like those the priests wore. And for giving up Samuel Jehovah rewarded Hannah with three more sons and two daughters.

Eli and his Sons.

Eli was now a very old man and his sons helped him to offer the sacrifices. But his sons were bad men and did many things which showed great disrespect to the worship of Jehovah. One version of the Bible calls them "Sons of Belial," which means "good-for-nothing fellows."

It was the custom when a sacrifice was offered to burn the fat of the animal on the altar for Jehovah. After the fat was entirely consumed the rest of the animal could be eaten by the family which offered the sacrifice, and a certain portion was given to the priest as his share for his services. But Eli's sons insisted on the best of the animal, and took it before the fat was burned. And if any one tried to prevent them from this disregard of a sacred custom, they threatened violence to him. This was only one of the wrong things they did. What effect would it have on a people to have bad men as their priests? Eli was a good man himself, but he was not firm enough with his sons. Instead of punishing them for their misdeeds or sending them away from serving as priests, he only reproved them gently and this had no effect. "They hearkened not unto the voice of their father."

This was what Samuel saw as he grew up in Shiloh, and some boys would have followed the bad example set by the priests. But Samuel was grieved and indignant that the wor-

ship of Jehovah should be treated so irreverently, and at last he felt it was his duty, though he was a mere child, to warn Eli of Jehovah's anger and punishment.

Samuel's Vision.

The Bible story of God's message to Samuel is a very beautiful one. In those days, we are told in 1 Samuel 3: 1, the word of God did not come to men as often as it had before. Would this be because God did not choose to reveal His will, or because there was no wise man who could understand His wishes and teach them to the people? One night Jehovah spoke to Samuel as he slept in the temple, where the sacred light was burning before the ark; but at first Samuel did not know it was Jehovah who spoke. Read 1 Samuel 3: 2-10. What did Jehovah then say to Samuel? Verses 11-14. And when morning came, Samuel had to tell Eli what had been said to him. Read the account of it in verses 15-18. After this the word of Jehovah came often to Samuel and Samuel told the people their duty. So all Israel knew that Samuel was a prophet. What do verses 19-21 say about it?

The Loss of the Ark.

At this time the Israelites and the Philistines were constantly at war, and it once happened, when Eli was very old, that the Israelites were badly defeated. Then the chief men gathered together and questioned why Jehovah had allowed such a defeat. No one knew; but it was decided that the battle must be renewed. What did they do to make sure of victory this time? 1 Samuel 4: 3-5. Why did the Israelites believe the victory would now be certain? What was the belief about the ark?

The Philistines, too, believed that Jehovah went into battle when the ark was carried. Read what they said when they heard of it: verses 6-9. What was the result of the battle? Verses 10, 11. Then the terrible news had to be taken to Eli, who waited full of fear for the report of the battle. See what happened when he heard that the ark was taken: verses 12-18.

The Ark among the Philistines.

With the belief the Israelites had about the sacredness of the ark, they must have thought when it was taken that the god of the Philistines was stronger than Jehovah, or else that Jehovah did not wish to save them. But very soon something happened which made both the Israelites and the Philistines believe that Jehovah was stronger than Dagon. These stories, like others we have read, have been exaggerated and added to in the desire to show Jehovah's power. They do show very clearly how the Hebrews regarded their ark.

The Philistines when they returned victorious, elated with their capture, placed the ark in the temple of their god. What does 1 Samuel 5: 1-3 say happened to the statue of Dagon? The Philistines could not believe this was an accident and they set Dagon up again in his place. What does the story say happened the next night? Verses 4, 5. And while the ark was at Ashdod a terrible disease or plague broke out in the city. Of course the inhabitants of the city believed it came as a punishment from the god of the Hebrews, so they sent away the ark to Gath. But those who took it carried the disease also, and it soon broke out in that city. So the people of Gath, believing the "hand of Jehovah" was against them, sent the ark to Ekron, and the same thing happened there. Then all the Philistines were afraid and no city would take it, so it was left in the open country for seven months. But during that time a great plague of field mice destroyed the crops. It must be due to Jehovah's anger, thought the Philistines, and arrangements at last were made to send back the ark to Jehovah's people, with presents of gold to appease the terrible god of the Israelites.

So the ark was received by the children of Israel with great rejoicing and was taken to the city of Kiriath-jearim, where it remained for many years. A young man of the city was made a priest to care for it. After this the Israelites could again believe that Jehovah was stronger than the god of their enemies.

XXX. Saul, the First King.

At the time of this lesson Samuel was an old man. He had done a great work for Israel during his life. Moses taught the Israelites the worship of Jehovah, but Samuel saved it from being forgotten. Since their entrance into Canaan the Israelites had adopted so many of the customs of these people and had become so indifferent to the worship of Jehovah, except in times of distress, that there was great danger that they would really become Canaanites and Baal worshippers and that the worship of Jehovah would die.

Samuel saw this danger and all his life worked against it. As a prophet and judge he traveled from place to place offering sacrifices and judging the people. At every opportunity he urged them to return to Jehovah and to resist the idolatrous Canaanites and Philistines, who were taking away their independence, and Jehovah would help them. All their ills, he believed, were the result of forsaking Jehovah.

By this time the Philistines had such control of the Israelites' country that garrisons were established throughout central Canaan to put down any rebellion that might arise. And the untrained Israelites were so afraid of the well-armed and well-drilled Philistine army that they dared not resist. Then, too, Samuel started "schools of prophets" or bands of enthusiastic men who went through the land singing patriotic songs for Israel and Jehovah, rousing the people from their fear and indifference. We shall often read of these "schools of prophets."

The Need of a King.

The strong nations which surrounded the Hebrews all had their kings,—rulers who kept their people strong and united. At last many of the Israelites came to feel that the only way to conquer their foes and regain their independence was for the separate tribes to unite under one leader who should be

their chief and judge in time of peace, and their commander in time of war. A king was the more needed because Samuel was now old and there was no prophet to take his place. Samuel had appointed his two sons to help him in his duties as Judge, and they performed this work in the southern part of the kingdom. But they were not good Judges. Read what 1 Samuel 8: 3 says about them.

Then the chief men of Israel went to Samuel and asked for a king. What did they say to him? Verses 4-6. So Samuel prayed to Jehovah about it, and then he told the people that Jehovah was willing to let them have a king; but first they must consider what a king might do to them. In those days a king was absolute ruler; the people had no rights. The king could seize their lands and make slaves of their sons and daughters, if he wished. Read in chapter 8: 11-22 what Samuel said to them about kings and what the people answered.

The Choice of a King.

We have two accounts in the book of Samuel of how Saul was chosen to be the first king. This shows that the stories in the book of Samuel were taken from some earlier writings, just as the stories in Genesis were. What does 1 Samuel 9: 2 say about Saul? The word "young" in this verse cannot be used as we use it, for we shall see in the next lesson that when he became king, Saul had a grown-up son.

One of the stories says that Jehovah had told Samuel that on a certain day, at a certain hour, a man from the tribe of Benjamin would come to him and Samuel should anoint him as king of Israel. See how it was brought about: 1 Samuel 9: 3-10. So Saul and his servant found Samuel returning from a sacrifice. And when Samuel saw Saul, he was told by Jehovah that this was the man who should be made king. What did Samuel say to Saul? Verses 19, 20. Read Saul's reply in verse 21. Then Samuel took Saul to his house, where a feast had been prepared, and he made Saul sit in the seat of honor and brought to him the choicest part of the meat: verses 22-24. After the feast was over what did Samuel do? Verse 27 and 10: 1. Now read 10: 14-16.

The Choice by Lot.

The second story says Saul was chosen by lot. In these early times people often decided what to do or not to do by casting lots. We now consider it a foolish way to settle an important question, but at that time it was believed that the lot fell the way it did because God wished it so.

This story says that when Samuel found that the people still desired a king, he called them together at Mizpah and had the tribes of Israel pass before him. The lot fell to the tribe of Benjamin. Then he had the families or clans of Benjamin pass before him and the lot fell to the Matrites. And among the Matrites the lot finally fell to Saul, son of Kish. But when they looked for Saul he was not to be found, for he was a modest man and had hid himself. 1 Samuel 10: 22-27 tells where he was found and how he was made king.

The Victory over the Ammonites.

Saul soon had a chance to show his bravery and fitness to be the nation's leader. The Ammonites, who occupied the desert region east of the Jordan, threatened the Israelites in the city of Jabesh in Gilead. Find Jabesh on the map, east of the Jordan, and Gibeah, Saul's home, west of the river. Their terms of peace were that the men of the city should allow their right eyes to be put out, which would unfit them for war. Read what Saul did when he heard of this: 1 Samuel 11: 4-7. So Saul attacked the Ammonites and won a great victory: verse 11.

When Saul had been chosen by lot, you remember certain "worthless fellows" spoke disrespectfully of the choice of him as king. Read in verses 12, 13 what the people now wished to do to them and how Saul felt about it. What does this tell you of Saul's character? Now read verses 14, 15. At this feast Samuel made a long speech, in which he reminded the people how Jehovah had sent Moses and Aaron and Gideon and Jephthah to save them in times of need, and said that if they would fear Jehovah and serve him, Jehovah would prosper them and their king. Under Saul's rule the tribes, now united into one nation, did prosper.

XXXI. Saul's Great Victories.

Read 1 Samuel 13: 19, 20. This shows how the Philistines had become masters of the Israelites when Saul was made king. They were prevented from getting any sharp instrument with which they could some time fight the Philistines.

After Saul had won his great victory over the Ammonites he did not send all the men who had helped him back to their homes, but kept some with him in order to be ready when a good opportunity came for an attack on the Philistines. He kept two thousand with himself at Michmash, near Bethel, and one thousand were placed under the command of his son, Jonathan, in Gibeah. The only arms they had were clubs, stones, slings, bows, and arrows without metal heads. Only Jonathan and Saul, we are told, had sword or spear. 13: 22.

The Revolt.

At last Jonathan made an attack against the Philistine garrison stationed in his native town of Geba, or Gibeah. Read 1 Samuel 13: 3, 4. Then the Philistines advanced against Israel, but instead of rallying about Saul and Jonathan, what did the frightened Hebrews do? Verses 5-7. And the Philistines, finding no real resistance, separated into three divisions and turned to plunder and destroy everything they could lay hold of. When Saul numbered the people who were left to fight with him, there were only six hundred men. Saul and Jonathan with these six hundred encamped in Gibeah, and the Philistines possessed the pass of Michmash.

Jonathan's Bold Attack.

This pass is a deep valley extending from the Jordan River westward across central Canaan. Where the Philistines were garrisoned the sides of the pass were high, steep cliffs. One day, without his father's knowledge, Jonathan and his armor-bearer had wandered away from the camp. When he reached a place from which he could see the Philistine camp, the sight

was more than he could bear, and he proposed that they two attack the enemy. "For," he said, "Jehovah can save by a few as well as by many." So the two descended the rocky crag on their side of the pass, and amid the taunts of the Philistines climbed up the steep cliff on the other side. Read the account of Jonathan's success in 1 Samuel 14: 11-14. And verse 15 says that at the same time an earthquake occurred which caused even greater panic among the Philistines.

The Great Victory over the Philistines.

Now Saul's watchmen on the other side saw that something was going on in the enemy's camp and reported it to Saul. What did Saul say? Verse 17. Then Saul called the priest to see if Jehovah wished him to attack the Philistines or to remain in his own camp. But the tumult on the other side became so great that Saul did not wait for an answer. He gathered together his men, and those who had hid themselves came out to join him, and those whom the Philistines had made slaves in their army returned to him also. The story of the victory you will find in verses 19-23.

Saul's Rash Vow.

In order that no one should stop fighting till the Philistines were completely routed, Saul had vowed that any one who took food that day should be put to death. But Jonathan, who was far ahead, had not heard his father's command. See how he disobeyed it: verses 24-30. Do you think Jonathan was right in saying the men would have fought better if they had been allowed to relieve their hunger?

That night when the pursuit was over and the people had been allowed to eat of the food they had captured, Saul proposed that a night attack be made on the rest of the Philistines. So he called the priest to see if Jehovah favored the plan. But when the priest put on his ephod, which he wore at such times, and used the apparatus which they believed indicated Jehovah's wishes, there was no answer from Jehovah, and Saul thought it must be because some one of his men had sinned. So they cast lots to find who was guilty. Read verses 36-42. Al-

though Jonathan had saved Saul's kingdom and throne for him, his father would have fulfilled his vow. What have you learned was the early belief about an oath or vow? Verses 43-46 tell how the people saved Jonathan. This was a great victory. Though there were frequent battles between the Philistines and the Israelites in the border country, the Philistines did not again become masters of the Hebrew soil.

The Victory over the Amalekites.

After the victory over the Philistines, Saul fought against the other enemies of Israel, the Moabites, the Ammonites, the Edomites, and wherever he fought he won victories. One of the most notable was the victory over the Amalekites, the robber bands that came up from the south to despoil the country.

Saul was the king, but Samuel was the king's adviser and commander, because he was the prophet of Jehovah. When Saul went against the Amalekites, what command did Samuel give? 1 Samuel 15: 2, 3. Do you think such a command could have come from Jehovah? Why did Samuel think Jehovah wished it? See in verses 7-9 if Saul obeyed. Which way do you think was best, Saul's or Samuel's? Read of the meeting between the two, when Saul returned with Agag and with the animals he had been told to destroy: verses 13-23.

In later years the priests who wrote these histories wondered why Saul's children had not succeeded him as king. They thought it must be because Saul had displeased Jehovah that the kingdom went to another family, so they said it was because Saul disobeyed Samuel's command. Read 15: 24-28. Could Samuel have known that Saul's children would not succeed him? After pronouncing this punishment on the disobedient king, what did Samuel do? Verses 32, 33. What do Agag's words mean in verse 32? Then Samuel and Saul each returned to his own home, and "Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death, but Samuel mourned for Saul." We do not agree now with Samuel's thought of God, but at least one great truth has come to us from him. See what it is in verse 22.

XXXII. The Young David.

In the last lesson we found that Saul and Samuel had ceased to be friends. What story is told to explain the reason? Samuel was a stern, severe man and believed that all the enemies of Israel should be put to death. When Saul first became king he thought as Samuel did, but he soon saw that this would be impossible and that in order to keep his kingdom from destruction he must live in friendly relations with the Canaanite tribes whenever he could. Saul was put into a hard place. To save his nation, which was still weak, he had to follow a milder policy than Samuel and the zealous prophets demanded, and by so doing he gained their enmity.

The Anointing of David.

David was the great hero of the Hebrew people, as Washington is of the American. As a boy he spent his days tending the flocks of Jesse, his father, on the hills of Bethlehem. He was big and strong and brave; he had, besides, a great love for music, and as he sat in the fields with the flocks he played on the harp till he became very skilful. We shall see how this skill brought him to Saul's court.

The same writer who tells us why Jehovah took the throne away from Saul's family says that, soon after, Jehovah told Samuel to anoint one of the sons of Jesse as king. Read 1 Samuel 16: 1-5. You remember that Samuel went from place to place judging the people. What does verse 4 tell you about his judgments? Verses 6-13 give the account of how David was chosen of all the sons. What great truth do you find in one of these verses?

David goes to Saul's Court.

Saul's grief over losing Samuel's friendship, and his anxiety for the safety of his nation, which was not yet strong and was surrounded by enemies, soon had a serious effect on his mind. He became subject to fits of melancholy which later developed

into a kind of insanity. In early days people believed that such a condition was caused by an evil spirit entering into the body. Notice what verse 14 says of Saul. Do you think what this verse says can be true? Why not? Verses 15-23 tell how David was brought to Saul to calm him with his music. Physicians to-day find that music often has this effect on an insane person. What idea of David do you get from verse 18? Why are these good traits for a king to have?

David and Goliath.

This is the most famous of the David stories. The Philistines again made war upon Israel. In their army was a fierce giant who is described in 1 Samuel 17: 4-7. A cubit is about twenty inches, a span about eight inches; so Goliath was said to be over ten feet tall. The shekel weighed about half an ounce; so the giant's coat of mail weighed over one hundred and fifty pounds, and the head of his spear about nineteen pounds.

What challenge did this giant make to the Israelite army? Verses 8-11. Is it strange that all should be afraid to meet him in a hand-to-hand fight? For many days the giant sent his challenge, but no one dared to meet him. At last David, who, the account says, had been at home to see his father, heard of it and he was not afraid to battle with Goliath. At first Saul was very unwilling to let David so endanger his life, but David told him how he had killed a lion in the fields; so Saul finally consented. He put his own armor on David and gave him his sword, but David was not used to wearing armor and it hampered his free movements. He knew he could do better with the familiar weapon of his shepherd life. Read the account in verses 32-40. Verses 41-51 tell of Goliath's taunts and David's victory.

Years before, when the Philistines had not allowed the Israelites to have weapons of war, they had forced them to become skilful in the use of the sling. One story says that there were seven hundred men in the little tribe of Benjamin who could, left-handed, "sling stones at a hair breadth and not miss."

"When the Philistines saw that their champion was dead they fled. And the men of Israel and of Judah arose and

shouted and pursued the Philistines. . . . And the children of Israel returned from chasing after the Philistines, and they plundered their camp." Then Saul set David "over his men of war, and it was good in the sight of all people, and also in the sight of Saul's servants. And David went out whithersoever Saul sent him and behaved himself wisely."

When David and Saul returned from the war with the Philistines, the women and children came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing for joy. The song they sang is in 1 Samuel 18: 6, 7. Whom did they praise most in this song? Now Saul had a jealous nature and he was displeased. What did he say? Verses 8, 9. In the next lesson we shall see what this foolish jealousy led Saul to do.

XXXIII. Jonathan's Friendship for David.

What does 1 Samuel 18: 16 say about David? He had become the favorite of the people. At first, as we have seen, he had been a great favorite with Saul, too. When did Saul's love change to hatred? In ancient days what made a king secure on his throne was his brave leadership in times of war, and his wisdom above all others in times of peace. David was proving himself as brave and wise a warrior as Saul, and when the people put David over Saul in their praises, it is not to be wondered at that Saul became jealous. For it was always the king's natural desire to be the most popular man in his kingdom.

But Jonathan, Saul's son, did not feel as his father did. He had learned to love David, and they had made a covenant of friendship. 1 Samuel 18: 3, 4 tells how they sealed the compact. This friendship, which Jonathan proved in many ways, is one of the most famous in all history.

Saul attempts to kill David.

One day, when one of his fits of insanity came on and Saul was raving, David came in to play for him, as had been his custom. Read in 1 Samuel 18: 10, 11 what Saul tried to do. Then Saul put David at the head of a band of soldiers, hoping he would be killed in battle. But "Jehovah was with David," and his wisdom and bravery made the people love him more and more: 1 Samuel 18: 12-15.

Now Michal, one of Saul's daughters, loved David, and Saul saw here an opportunity to get rid of him. So he said that if David would again prove his bravery in battle with the Philistines, he would give him Michal for his wife. And David was again victorious, winning Michal and making himself a greater favorite with the people.

At last Saul could stand it no longer, and he ordered Jonathan and his servants to kill David. What do you think Jonathan

ought to have done, obey his father or befriend David? Read in 1 Samuel 19: 1-7 how Jonathan persuaded Saul that David was really one of his most loyal servants.

But Saul's kindly feeling did not last. There was another battle with the Philistines, and when David returned again victorious Saul forgot his promise to Jonathan and attempted once more to take David's life. So David fled to his own house, but Saul sent watchmen there to capture him in the morning. Read how Michal put the household idol in David's bed, pretending it was he, and how David escaped: verses 8-17. What do you think was right and what wrong in Michal's conduct?

Saul among the Prophets.

So David escaped and fled to Ramah, where Samuel was, and told him all that Saul had done. Now Saul heard where David had gone and it made him very angry, because Saul and the prophets were not friends, and he sent messengers to capture David; but when the messengers reached Ramah and found the prophets with Samuel at their head singing praises to Jehovah, they were carried away by the enthusiasm, forgot their errand, and sang and danced the sacred dance with the others.

When they did not return, Saul sent messengers a second, then a third time, with the same result. Then he went himself; but when he reached the band of prophets he, too, forgot his anger, threw off his royal garments, and sang and danced before Samuel. From this act of Saul's has come down the proverbial expression: "Is this Saul among the prophets?" which is used when a person is found in company where no one would expect him to be.

Jonathan proves His Friendship.

After this, David sought Jonathan and said, "What have I done? What is my sin before thy father, that he seeketh my life?" Since Saul's attempts against David occurred during his fits of insanity, Jonathan could not believe that his father really meant to kill him. But David was so sure, the two friends arranged a plan by which Jonathan should find out

what was in his father's heart concerning David. 1 Samuel 20: 5-11 tells what this plan was. Then David and Jonathan made to each other vows of friendship, and Jonathan promised to disclose to David his father's true feelings. David was to remain in hiding till he heard from Jonathan. In verses 18-23 you will see how Jonathan planned to let David know.

So David hid himself in the field and Jonathan returned to his father. And at the feast of the new moon, on the second day of the feast, Saul inquired where David was, and Jonathan replied as he had planned. Then Saul was angry at Jonathan for his friendship with David and ordered David to be brought to him that he might kill him. You will learn from verses 32-34 how Saul refused to listen to Jonathan and even tried to kill him in his anger. Thus Jonathan proved Saul's deep enmity, and in the morning he went into the field and gave David the signal they had agreed upon. Read of their parting in verses 35-42.

Why did Jonathan and David plan a secret signal? Had David done anything to make Saul doubt his loyalty? Did Jonathan do right or wrong in befriending David against his father? Would Saul's hatred of David help or hurt Saul with his people? What would have been the wiser course for Saul?

XXXIV. Saul's Pursuit of David.

How did Jonathan prove his friendship for David in the last lesson? After what Jonathan told him, the only thing left for David was to get away from Saul as quickly as possible; so he fled southward toward his old home in Bethlehem. Near Jerusalem was Nob, a city of priests, which David reached exhausted and hungry, where he was met by the chief priest, Ahimelech, who wondered why the king's son-in-law should come alone. David wanted food, but he was afraid to tell the priests he was fleeing from Saul, for fear they would not dare to help him. So he said that the king had sent him on urgent secret business, and Ahimelech must not let it be known that he had seen David. So Ahimelech gave David five loaves of bread for himself and his men, who, David said, were to meet him at a certain place.

Then David said to Ahimelech, "Is there not here a spear or sword? For I have neither brought my sword nor my weapons with me, because the king's business required haste." And the priest said, "The sword of Goliath, the Philistine, whom thou slewest, behold, it is here; if thou wilt take that, take it; for there is none other save that here." And David said, "There is none like that; give it me." So David took the sword of Goliath from the temple, but as he left he saw standing near, Doeg, the Edomite, the chief of Saul's herdsmen. He knew Doeg would tell Saul, so he hastened on and hid in a cave in the hill country of Judah.

The Cave of Adullam

Find Adullam on the map. The hilly region of Judah is covered with immense rocks which form great caverns, some of them being large enough to shelter hundreds of men. David found a refuge in one of the caves, as outlaws do at the present day, and here he was joined by his parents and brothers, who might not be safe where Saul could reach them. Who else joined David in the cave of Adullam? 1 Samuel 22: 1, 2.

David thus became the captain of a band of outlaws or freebooters,—a kind of Robin Hood. The life he would have to live would be too hard and dangerous for his aged parents, so David very soon made plans for their safety. Read verses 3, 4. Would it take bravery to make this trip? Notice on the map where David would have to travel. He was none too soon, for word was brought by friends that his hiding place was discovered: verse 5.

Saul and the Priests of Nob.

Now Saul soon saw that David had friends who kept him warned of Saul's plans and he was very indignant. What did he say about it? Verses 6-8. Then Doeg, the Edomite, reported what Ahimelech had done for David at Nob. Saul became angry and sent for Ahimelech and all the priests, and demanded why they had conspired against him by helping David. Ahimelech had heard nothing of Saul's hatred for David, and he was astonished. Read verse 14. His answer only angered Saul more. What did Saul then do? Verses 16-23. Would this conduct from Saul be likely to make him more popular with his people? Saul's own unfortunate temper did him far more harm than David ever did.

The Relief of Keilah.

While David was in the forest of Hereth he heard that the Philistines had attacked Keilah and robbed the people of their grain. Often he had led Saul's army against the Philistines, and he was still a friend of Saul and of Israel. When Abiathar, the priest, had fled to David, he had taken with him the ephod, by means of which it was believed Jehovah told men what they wished to know. So David inquired of Jehovah if he should help Keilah. Read the story of how David saved Keilah and of the ingratitude of the city in 1 Samuel 23: 1-14.

The Ziphites betray David.

But David was not safe even among the hills and caves in the wilderness of Ziph, for the treacherous Ziphites, who had knowledge of where he was hiding and knew the region well, went to Saul and agreed to deliver David into his hands. Saul

and his men went with the Ziphites, and they very nearly succeeded in capturing David and his followers. They had cut off all the passes so that only a mountain separated David from his pursuers. But just as capture seemed certain, word was brought to Saul that the Philistines had made a raid upon the land. So Saul had to return from pursuing David to fight against the Philistines, and David fled to the cave of En-gedi. Find this place on the map, just west of the Dead Sea.

David spares Saul's Life.

When Saul had driven off the Philistines he learned that David was hiding in the wilderness of En-gedi, and again with a small army of picked men he went out in pursuit of him. It happened one day that Saul went into a certain cave to sleep, and this cave was the very one in which David and his men were hiding. What would have been the natural thing for David to do under these circumstances,—considering the time in which he lived? The story of what he did do is one of the finest stories we have of David. You will find it in 1 Samuel 24: 1-22.

In verse 14 what did David mean? Why did he refuse to kill Saul? What do you think of his conduct in sparing so bitter an enemy? Do you think David could trust Saul after this? This story is told again in a little different way by another writer in chapter 26. You may be interested in comparing the two stories.

XXXV. David's Life as a Fugitive.

Have you thought how David could get food enough for his six hundred men in the wilderness of Judah? From the earliest times it had been the custom for the shepherds and villagers who lived on the border-land of the desert to pay the wandering tribesmen about them for their protection. And it was also an unwritten law that at the great feasts those who had plenty should share with those who had none. So in this way David lived by the gifts of those whose flocks he had protected, and perhaps also by raids on the hostile Arab tribes south of Judah.

Nabal and Abigail.

Now there was a rich man of Carmel, in Judah, whose flocks and herds and shepherds David's men had often saved from wild beasts and robbers. So when the usual feast that followed he sheep-shearing was held, David, according to the custom of the time, sent to Nabal, asking for a present for himself and his men. Read 1 Samuel 25: 2-8. But Nabal was a mean, ill-natured man and he refused to obey the ancient law. See in verses 10-13 what he said and what David in his anger threatened to do? Why would it have been very unwise as well as wicked for David to do this? But David was saved from this crime by the good judgment of Nabal's wife, Abigail, who had a very different nature from Nabal.

One of Nabal's men heard of David's anger and reported it to Abigail, telling her also how David's men had befriended them and how Nabal had brought this trouble upon them. Read in verses 14-17 what he said to her. What did Abigail immediately do? Verses 18-23. Then Abigail asked David to forgive Nabal for his foolish and selfish conduct, and begged him to accept the present she brought him and to remember her when prosperity should come to him once more. David's reply to her you will find in verses 32-35. So Abigail returned

to her own house and in the morning she told Nabal what she had done.

Soon after this, as a result of his intemperate habits, Nabal died, and it seemed to David and his friends as if Jehovah had punished him for his meanness, and David was very thankful that he had been prevented from doing the evil he had planned.

David among the Philistines.

Although Saul at the time of our last lesson seemed friendly to David, his nature was so untrustworthy that David did not feel safe in the Israelite territory. We have already seen how there was danger that some one might betray him into Saul's hands. Read in 1 Samuel 27: 1-4 what David at last decided to do. He did not go to the Philistines till he felt that there was safety nowhere else, for the Philistines were the enemies of Israel and David was loyal to his country and his king. We shall see that even here he did all he could to help Saul. Would the king of the Philistines be glad to have so brave a band as David's to fight for him?

But David did not want to be sent to fight his own people, so he asked Achish to give him and his men a city in the south. What city did Achish give him? Verses 5, 6. Find Ziklag on the map and notice how far it is from the city of Gath, where Achish lived. It was so far away that David was able to carry out a dangerous policy. From Ziklag he made marauding expeditions against the tribes in the south country, but he attacked those which were enemies of Israel and friendly with the Philistines. He never turned his arms against the friends of Israel. And in order that his treachery should not be discovered, he put to death every man and woman so that no one could carry a report to Achish. Then when he went to Achish with the booty he had taken, to divide it with him, he told Achish that he had made the raid against certain tribes that were allies of Israel. And Achish believed him and thought, "He hath made his people Israel utterly to abhor him; therefore he shall be my servant forever." Read the account in verses 8-12. What do you think of this conduct of David's as a return for the protection of Achish?

The Philistine Princes distrust David.

At last there was war between the Philistines and Israel, and David was called upon to fight against his own people. He did not dare refuse to go with the Philistines. His careful reply to Achish is given in 1 Samuel 28: 1, 2.

But when the Philistines gathered together at Apheck to begin their march, the Philistine princes, seeing David in their army and not trusting him as Achish did, were afraid that in the midst of the battle he might turn against them. What did they say about it? 1 Samuel 29: 1-5. So Achish, against his own wishes, felt obliged to send David back to Ziklag, and David was saved from a very difficult situation. Unless David meant to do what the princes suspected, he must have been greatly relieved to be sent back. But he answered Achish indignantly, asking what he had done that he should not be trusted. Their conversation is told in verses 6-10.

So David returned early the next morning with his men to Ziklag, and the Philistines went up to Jezreel to fight against Israel. In the next lesson we shall see what had happened at Ziklag while David was gone, and how fortunate it was that David returned when he did.

XXXVI. Saul's Defeat and Death.

When the Philistines refused to let David go with them into battle against the Israelites, he returned to Ziklag, which he reached three days later. What did he find had happened in his absence? 1 Samuel 30: 1-6.

The Attack on the Amalekites.

Then David called Abiathar, the priest, and inquired through the sacred lot if Jehovah would give him the victory if he pursued the Amalekites. And when he found the answer was favorable, he and his six hundred men hastened after them. But they had already traveled a long journey since they left Achish, and two hundred of his men were so tired that David left them at the brook Besor with the baggage, while he and the four hundred remaining continued southward. Read how David found in the desert a slave of the Amalekites who had been left behind, and how this slave led David to the Amalekite camp where they were rejoicing over their spoil: 1 Samuel 30: 9-20.

So David returned victorious with all the people and all the animals that the Amalekites had taken. When he reached the brook Besor, those who had gone on with David were, very selfishly, unwilling to share their booty with the two hundred who had remained behind. How did David settle the matter? Verses 21-25. This is the account of how one of the binding laws of Israel began. And when David came to Ziklag, he sent presents from the spoil of the Amalekites to all those who had befriended him in Judah when he was fleeing from Saul.

Saul and the Witch of Endor.

In the last lesson we left Saul on the eve of battle with the Philistines. The two armies were encamped near the valley of Jezreel,—the Philistines at Shunem, the Israelites at Gilboa. Find these places on the map. When Saul saw the size of the Philistine army his courage failed him, and he

tried to find out, as people of those days believed they could, if he would be victorious on the morrow. But in no way could he learn what he wished, neither from dreams, nor by the Urim or sacred lot, nor could the prophets tell him. Then in his desperation Saul decided to try if Samuel, who was now dead, could help him. Now in those days it was believed that certain people had the power to call back the dead. But because this was a custom of the heathen, Samuel and then Saul had been very severe in punishing these witches or wizards who claimed to have this power, so that it was not safe for them to live in Israel.

But Saul now, in his hour of despair, inquired if a witch could be found, that through her he might learn from Samuel about the battle the next day. So Saul disguised himself and went to the Witch of Endor. The account of Saul's visit to the Witch of Endor you will find in 1 Samuel 28: 3-14. Notice in verses 13, 14 that it was the witch, not Saul, who claimed to see Samuel. What does the story tell us Samuel said? Verses 15-19. If it is true that Samuel did visit a witch, who do you think really said these words? Would it be easy for her to deceive Saul in his excited state of mind? Would it be possible for the Witch of Endor to know that Saul and Jonathan would be killed the next day and that David would become king? How do you account for the story saying so? What effect did this prophecy have on Saul? Read verses 20-25. Would the feeling that he was to fail be of any help to Saul the next day? Why is it better for us not to know what is going to happen in the future?

The Death of Saul.

The next day Saul and the Philistines fought at Mount Gilboa, and Israel "fled from before the Philistines." In the battle Jonathan was slain. And when Saul was wounded and found that he would be taken, rather than suffer this disgrace, what did he do? 1 Samuel 31: 1-6. What the Philistines did with the body of Saul shows us how brutal and barbarous these times were: verses 7-10. But Saul had been much beloved by many of his subjects. Among these were the men

of Jabesh-gilead whom he had saved from the Amorites when he first became king. What these men, at great risk to themselves, now did is told in verses 11-13.

So Saul was dead and David could return safely to his own land. But David could not forget the times when Saul had loved him, and he deeply mourned for Saul and Jonathan. And when he became king, he rewarded the men of Jabesh-gilead for their bravery and loyalty in saving Saul's body from the Philistines.

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